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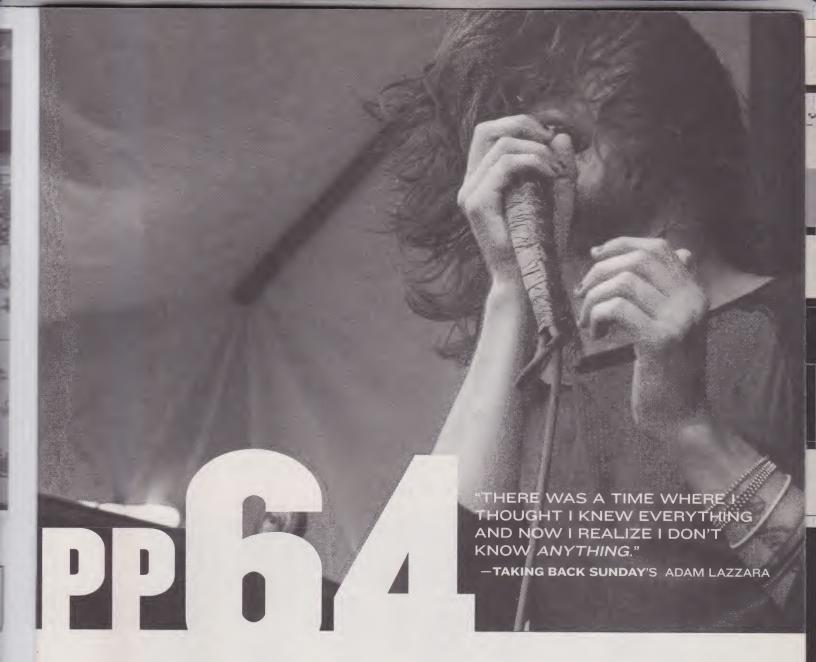
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intro64

ome stories, you just never get tired of hearing. Did you hear the one about the guy who did something on a whim—just as a joke, a lark—and it ended up being the thing he was truly good at; the one thing that truly defines who he is; the one thing that he'd been searching for all this time? It's a classic. It's one of those stories that, for me, I can hear over and over again. Ultimately it's a story—in its many permutations—that whispers quietly in your ear, things can work out, sometimes.

In this uncertain world, sometimes those words are exactly what you need to hear. I know they certainly help me. And so, in honor of the changes that are happening in the country and in the world, and perhaps even in your house or in your head, we offer up the story of Fred Armisen.

Fred was a local Chicagoan toiling away behind a drum kit in a great band that was never going to be as big as they should have been. It's a familiar tale in the underground if ever there was one. Except this one ends with Fred on TV every week and loving every second of the strange and

unexpected turn his life is taking. How he got from a crowded tour van to what's arguably the biggest comedy stage in the world makes for some damn fine reading.

Also amazing, inspiring, uplifting, and about a hundred more adjectives, is this issue's photo essay from the Republican National Convention protests, "This is What Democracy Looks Like." There are few feelings more incredible than being on a street surrounded by hundreds of thousands people raising their voices for change, and the photos that came back from this historic event fill me with a similar rush. I hope they do the same for you.

Finally, it's with a heavy heart that I announce a couple of people moving on from *Punk Planet*.

First is this issue's cover story author Trevor Kelley, whose insightful interviews as contributing editor over the last year (and freelance work for the magazine for five or so) have been a huge boon to *Punk Planet*. Trevor's moving on to do freelance writing for some bigger music mags which, when you consider

his sizable talent, was probably inevitable—but I for one am going to work hard to make sure he still writes for us from time to time.

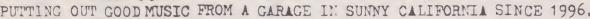
Last—but certainly, as they say, not least—is the departure of long-time Punk Planet associate editor Joel Schalit. Joel has lent his unique perspective and editorial talents to Punk Planet going all the way back to issue 17. To say that his contributions will be missed is the understatement of the year. Over the last eight years Joel has served as a sounding board, steady hand, and friend to me and the magazine. We have been lucky to have him around for this long. Joel's going on to be the managing editor at Tikkun magazine, and we all wish him the best of luck there.

Though it's sad to see Trevor and Joel go, it's another great reminder that the only constant you can truly count on is change. Sometimes change is frightening and sometimes it's exciting.

Here's to both.



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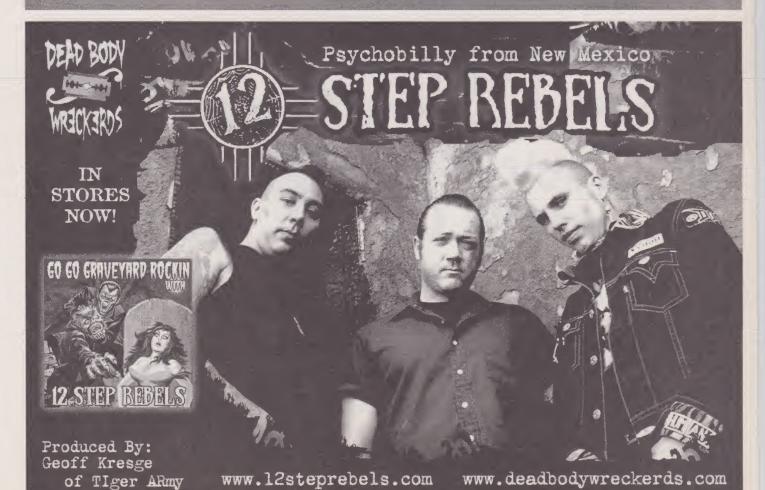


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PR: a response

Dear Nick Lawton

Thanks for writing to PP [Mail, PP62]. I'm glad my interview with Trevor is starting some discussion. Q and Not U started six years ago, guided by very strong, almost militant, DIY principles. We booked ourselves, promoted ourselves, and publicly scorned any band who didn't do otherwise. We've been through the fire and have enjoyed an amazing dialogue with many enthusiastic listeners. But over the last six years, the climate in the underground has changed and so have we. Is it for better or for worse? It's hard to say, but we know we're still hungry. Here are some of the many questions our band has argued about in recent months:

Is it okay to hire a publicist or booking agent if they're a close friend, operate fairly and understand our beliefs? Should we promote ourselves through the mass media if we feel we're delivering a political or aesthetic message that would not otherwise be voiced? Can we connect with people outside of "punk rock" and bring them into the culture without exploiting the culture? Would doing so exile us from punk culture? Does staying DIY create a ceiling for our growth? Would doing things as we've done in the past limit our sense of fulfillment? How long before we can afford health insurance? Is the growth of a band synonymous with the number of ears you get into? How do we reconcile the fact that some of our idols (the Clash, Prince, Caetano Veloso, Public Enemy, Sly and the Family Stone, Curtis Mayfield) were both powerful political forces and enormous commercial success?

We'll never reconcile many of these issues, but we want to keep moving and try new things. If we make a mistake, we'll take a step back. We hope that people who have invested themselves in our work are willing to follow us because we know we're making the

best music we've ever made, we want to do it with people, we refuse to feel guilty about our desire to communicate and we don't want to stop. To me, "punk" has always been a dialogue where the audience and the musicians are always equal. So I want to thank you for your letter. I'll know I'm a sell-out when I don't care enough to write you back.

See you in Vancouver,

Christopher Richards Q and Not U

Afropunk: one person's story

Punk Planet-

I usually don't read your magazine, but today I read parts of an article concerning James Spooner [Afropunk, PP62] and a movie he made about Black punks and I have a few things to say.

I'm 45, African-American male, and a native of the District of Columbia. I bought my first rock album in 1970 and I explored the various types of rock music made during the '60s and '70s before punk came onto the scene. I first really began to listen to punk and new wave around 1978. I liked the energy of groups like the Clash, Gang of Four, and Public Image Ltd, etc... However, in the case of the Clash what I really liked was the honesty, emotion, and seemingly their interest in racial equality and social justice. In general, I related to the general feeling of being or feeling alienated from society expressed by many of the punk-new wave bands of that era and of course I liked the music.

Since I was going to college 50 miles west of Boston at the time, there was plenty of racism to deal with both within the punk world and outside of it, but I endured that and, quite frankly, most of the time I had a lot of fun. First, I am a human being, then African-American, punk, long hair, or whatever. Racism is a part of our society and I deal with it as best

I can. However, when I listen to music I look for something that I like and does it say something that I can relate to. I like many different types of music and one of the things about the punk scene at that time is that you could have bands like the Bad Brains, Delta 5, Public Image, the English Beat, and Lydia Lunch and each of these bands had their own unique sound. Also, because of punk scene, I got into Reggae and at that time most African-Americans weren't necessarily listening to Reggae a lot. Punk didn't speak to me because it was designed for White people, which it may have been. Nor do I deny the fact that some punks were racist, because some were. (Oi, skin bands, etc.) That is something no one involved with punk at that time can deny!

However, the Clash made great rock music because they were a great rock band, period. I'm not looking for a movie or CD made for me as an African-American because that assumes that all Black punks or African-Americans like the same thing and I know that ain't true. I'm looking for a movie or CD that makes good music. My problem is with the music industry in general where some record labels and night club owners have concluded that Black Americans and people of color cannot play anything other than funk, rap, soul, R&B, gospel, or jazz. One will note that no other black rock guitarist other than the great Jimi Hendrix has had emerged in the last 30 years other than maybe Prince or Lenny Kravitz who are not strictly rock artists. You mean to tell me that Black people don't play rock music? (punk or otherwise) I know that that is not true. I've never been a fan of the idea that because you are a certain color or ethnic group that you have to listen to or play a certain type of music. Someday, the world will see things my way I hope.

Reuben Marks

We want your letters! Send to punkplanet@punkplanet.com or mail to: Punk Planet 4229

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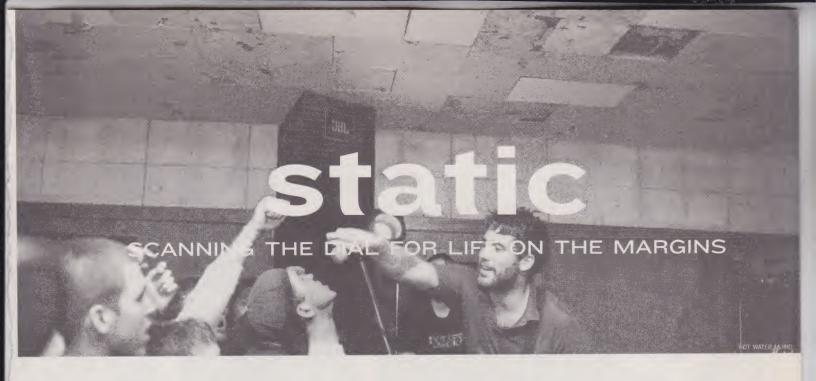


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"It felt like the parents were away and the kids had taken over the asylum."

WITH THE SURPRISE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE END OF ALL-AGES SHOWS AT CHICAGO'S LEGENDARY FIRESIDE BOWL, THOSE THAT FREQUENTED IT LOOK BACK AT THE VENUE'S LASTING LEGACY.

"his can't last forever." That was probably one of the first things I thought when people started booking all-ages shows at Chicago's Fireside Bowl a decade ago. It had been a bad time for the under-21 set in Chicago. The only regular all-ages venue-a bar 40 minutes out of the city that held matinee shows once a weekhad closed a year before. Barely-legal basement shows cropped up to fill the void, but they were under-promoted and factionalized (north side vs. south side vs. west side). Touring bands had started bypassing the country's thirdlargest city in favor of places like DeKalb, Illinois and Beloit, Wisconsin. And then, something amazing happened:

someone figured out that for just \$50, you could rent a neglected bowling alley on the city's near northwest side.

"My favorite memories of the Fireside Bowl revolve around the early days-the 'Wild West' period if you will," remembers Johann's Face Records owner Marc Ruvolo, who also played the Fireside countless times with his many bands. "It only cost \$50 to rent for the night and when Jimmy, the owner, would go out of town for the weekend, it was pure mayhem: The booze was free, people were dancing on the bar, and great bands ripped it up on a creaky stage in a wrecked bowling alley. It felt like the parents were away and the kids had taken over the asylum. Pure punk rock heaven."

Ruvolo's feelings are echoed among many that played underneath the rotting dropped ceiling and alongside the dusty lanes of the Fireside. As word of the Fireside spread, it quickly became one of those places that people who had never been to spoke of in hushed tones.

"Growing up in a suburb where punk shows were painfully rare, I lived through photographs," reminisces Q and Not U's Christopher Richards. "At 17, I had never seen the Fireside, but I knew what it looked like thanks to the CD booklet of Trenchmouth's Broadcasting System and countless emo bands sweating it out the pages of zines like Number Two and Polyvinyl. The photos made it look like a grimy, desperate gathering place—a place people didn't visit for pleasure, but out of absolute necessity. And of course, that made it the coolest place on earth."

Longtime Washington DC punk Alec Bourgeois had seen the Fireside, just has he had seen other legendary clubs like DC Space, Maxwells, and the Jabberjaw. All of them were the type of place that "in the square world wouldn't have lasted a week," he says. "What all these places had in common was that when the kids were given the keys and allowed to run wild, instead of burning the place down, they proved that idealism and dedication don't breed abstraction, but loyalty and longevity."

Dedication also breeds more amazing shows, more friendships, more ground-breaking music, and more memories than can possibly fit on every single page of this magazine, let alone the few hundred words there's space for here. When the news was announced on August 2Ist that the Fireside Bowl had hosted its last all-ages punk show—just over a decade after its first—those memories came to the forefront for many.

"I think my first Fireside show was in December of '94," remembers The Reputation's

GALLERY: Fireside Memories

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW BALLANTYNE







Elizabeth Elmore. "I rode up with some kids from Champaign to see Slant 6, the Makeup, Cap'n Jazz, and Car vs. Driver. I was 18 at the time and being a downstate kid from a town of 2,000, I was 50 excited to be at a punk show in Chicago. But I was also really intimidated since I had only been into punk for a few years at that point—and you could tell by looking around that those kids knew their shit."

"One of my favorite memories," remembers Alec Bourgeois, "was watching a family—a mom, dad and two kids—come in and bowl for an hour during our sound-check, apparently completely oblivious to the idea that there might be anything strange about a bowling alley that only had two lanes in any kind of condition to play

and a punk band blaring in the background,"

"The Fireside provided a venue for those weird bands that wouldn't be touched by a more traditional bar or club, as well as for some 'big name' acts as well," says Dianogah's Jay Ryan. "Over the years I saw countless high school-aged bands (sometimes with parents embarrassingly in tow), some less 'accessible' touring acts such as Lightning Bolt, Stinking Lizaveta, and the Thrones, as well as heavy hitters like Shellac, Tortoise, and Veruca Salt. Sometimes bands from all three classifications would be on the same bill."

"The only time Silkworm played the Fireside, we had just finished driving for 28 hours straight," remembers bassist Tim Midgett. "Our van had taken a dump on us in Butte, Montana. The five of us ended up making the trip in a 1968 Plymouth Valiant stuffed with as many guitars, amps, and clothes as it would hold-it was not the most stylish or comfortable way to travel. We were all completely zonked. The show felt like we were playing underwater. Everything was about 2/3 normal speed, and when we opened our mouths to sing, nothing but stale car air came out. Somehow, it was really fun. It was kind of the perfect place to play after making an all-night drive."

"Shellac played there on a New Year's Day morning six or seven years ago with the Nerves," recalls Shellac bassist Bob Weston. "It was a blast. We had PopTarts and toasters out for everybody. Barry from the Coctails rented a fancy espresso machine and jerked cappuccinos. We decided to make the show late enough that you wouldn't stay up all night, but early enough that it took some effort to get out of bed and get there."

"We played the Fireside on our first tour in 1997," says Justin Moyer of El Guapo. "I was 20 years old. Being from the East Coast, it was only my second Chicago trip. The few who know us now didn't know us then. Somehow we slipped on to a good bill with the Cold, Cold Hearts (Alison of Bratmobile and friends) and this Jon Spencerish guy called Danko Jones. I guess you could slide on to shows back then without talking to somebody's booking agent, publicist, manager, sister-in-law, and







Chicago photographer Andrew Ballantyne has been shooting photos at the Fireside Bowl for years. The hundreds of photos he has shot over the Fireside's 10 years capture the energy and feeling that made the Fireside Bowl what it was for so long.

attache. We got paid \$50—the second-best paying show of the tour. When we played with Ted Leo and Chicago's own Sweet Heat (Kim Thompson and friends) last year, there were more people and more money, but nothing quite matched the charm of that first show in the Clinton years booked within three weeks of learning how to use e-mail."

"I remember being really impressed by the amazing woman that was our sound engineer," says Del Cielo's Katy Otto. "I also remember meeting kids from Chicago that did record labels, wrote zines, were starting distros, and so forth. The energy and the spirit of creativity around the space itself was palpable. It will truly be a huge loss for the punk community as a whole to have

that space no longer functioning the way it did for years."

That loss was, when you really think about it, a long time coming. Everyone knew it couldn't last forever. Something as perfect as the Fireside never does. Rumors of the club's closure followed it almost from the beginning. Ben Davis recalls that every time he played the Fireside over nine years with the Sleepytime Trio, Milemarker, and Bats & Mice he was told "this was the last show I would ever get to play there because the Fireside was going to be closing." There was the underage drinking (later clamped down) that was going to shut the place down. There was the gentrification of the neighborhood that was going to raze the club in favor of condos. There was the City of

Chicago's plan to expand the park next door. But, ultimately, the Fireside Bowl seems to have closed for the most unlikely of reasons: The owner, Jim Lapinski, whose family has owned the Fireside for 40 years, wants to turn it back into a bowling alley.

That its closing was unannounced and unceremonious has left many in Chicago and nationally scratching their heads; bands are scrambling to fill in lost dates (club booker Brian Petersen has found new spaces for some shows), and many are beginning to ask if a place as unique as the Fireside can ever happen again.

"I wonder if something like this will continue to exist in the corporate-infiltrated world of punk these days," asks Shelby Cinca of
Decahedron and Frodus.
"Things are changing now:
Clear Channel owns clubs,
radio, and even booking
agencies in Europe. For some
reason it feels as if the passing
of clubs and bands is like the
moment in Lord Of The Rings
when the Elves go off to the
Grey Havens never to return."

While a trip to the Fireside bathrooms definitely felt like a descent into the Mines of Moria, all hope is not lost. "Everything is connected," Cinca continues, "and I hope that now more than ever the punks of this generation remember to always question and never consume blindly, and to use the technological tools available to create a true forward-thinking underground in the 2000s."—Daniel Sinker



"We like to put paint on our faces and start to laugh and make music and drawing at the same time."

ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR MONTREAL'S LES GEORGES LENINGRAD, 'CAUSE THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE IS ROCK.

es Georges Leningrad are a fantasy skronk band from Montreal who are currently finding new notoriety as part of the burgeoning "Canada Explosion." But unlike Hot Hot Heat or The Unicorns, LGL are not a linear band—in fact, they make almost no sense, have marginal English (as witness: the following interview) and are genius in a way that's not winsome, comely, or obvious (again, peep what follows). Their new album comes out at the end of 2004 on micro-indie Super8, and sounds like it was recorded while they hid under a box. It's jarring party music for the unbrushed-wigs set.

How did you first fall in love with music?

Mingo: It's a long, long story. When I was young I was always eating my cereal with milk. The sound of my Rice Krispies make my day very well. This sound was always in my head for long and long. Later my father gives me his old records of the Beatles. When I was putting it on, it was the same sound as my Rice Krispies. This was the first fall.

"We talked outside at 6 a.m. and by 9 a.m. there was a riot."

MAKING A BEAUTIFUL RUCKUS WITH THE INFERNAL NOISE BRIGADE

f all went according to plan five years ago, the Infernal Noise Brigade would not have protested New York City's 2004 Republican National Convention. After all, the marching drum battery-cumstreet performance crew formed in 1999 with a one-shot mission: inject musical spunk into Seattle's World Trade Organization protest.

The Brigade started innocuously. Filastine, a musi-

cian and a founding Brigade member, helped corral a ragtag outfit of majorettes, tactical advisors, rifle twirlers, flag wavers, vocalists, and drumbeating percussionists. Many had a musical background, many did not. They practiced for a couple months, memorized a couple routines and, on that infamous day, readied themselves for what they imagined to be a couple minutes of street mayhem.

"We walked outside at 6 a.m., and by 9 a.m. there was a riot," says DP Punkass (pseudonyms are de rigueur in the group), who plays tom drum for the Brigade.

At that, the one-off lark became a five-year odyssey. Marching with neither banners nor shouted slogans, the Infernal Noise Brigade has unleashed its "sound-track for insurrection," as they call it, the world over. Armed with a musical pastiche ranging from Balkan melodies to '50s jazz to North African beats, they've joined a street-destroying protest in Prague; they've infused Berlin's May Day

mashup with musical bedlam; and, in a mellower twist, they've drunkenly recorded an album at a Cancun, Mexico bar.

So their RNC presence was a no-brainer. In New York City, they performed benefits in industrial lofts. marched across floating boats and, of course, participated in one of the most massive American protests in recent memory. That was the easy part. What to wear was another story. Chief among Dok, Filastine, Punkass and other shrouded members' concerns was making it clear they were not hell-bent on Seattle-style property destruction. To dis-

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Bobo: I can't say that I felt in love with music. I didn't care. I had to find some ways to let the ghosts out of my mind, to kill the fuckers under my bed. My mother was playing the piano sometimes and I hated it. I was running from the house. I was spending all my time in the woods. I was breaking the trees and screaming really hard. I was playing the mad wild-boar.

Poney: When I was seven years old, I was listening to Martine St. Clair, a famous teen pop singer. My best friend at the time was taking her mother's bras and we were making choreography along to the music. I never had any curiosity in music. I was listening to what was around, depending on who were the friends and boyfriends of the time. Thrift stores were involved a lot into that education, too. Music for me is a soundtrack for life, nothing else. Lust for life is a great one.

How did you start making music?

Mingo: I'm always trying to know how to make music. It's hard to do when you have no teacher, but I've been trying since I was 15 years old.

Bobo: I finally broke my mother's piano, with no shame. When I saw her devastated face, I felt sick and cried like a widow. I said that I was not intelligent. I was living like an animal. She bought me a black drum kit. I immediately started a band called God's Will. After school, I was doing wrestling in a barn with my friends of that time. I said "Hey, I have a black drum kit. I'll put it in this corner, and I'll pound the shit out of my black machine while you guys are

Poney: It is a mistake, but I am very proud of it. The first time, I

the same time.

was singing under the table because I was too shy. I was drinking as much as I could and then recording my voice into the wardrobe. Suddenly I was on the stage, as an unrevelling mummy. Right now, they should do a movie about my story that really looks pretty much like Flashdance. An American dream posterized. Walking like a garbage can.

fighting." The results were sensational. I was learning everything at

Is your band a collaborative effort—and if so, how does that work?

Mingo: We make all together like priests and nuns. It's a big game, like when you're young and you play Lego. We like to put paint on our faces and start to laugh and make music and drawing at the same time.

Bobo: It grows very fast. Every idea is important for our survival on the ironclad. We have specific orders to accomplish. At the same time, we touch everything to break that group-killing treadmill. Facility is dull. A soft and warm bed is not for us.

Poney: I put on my sea-diving suit as far as I could underwater, and try to find some abyss creatures, like Miro, and play along with them. We go into abstraction, childhoods, haunted houses, and Salvation Army. Pepper, salt and cream soda. Nous sommes des pirates. I don't know if we have talent, but we are not scared. -Jessica Hopper

tinguish themselves, they added flair.

If they wore black shirts, Punkass says, they would wear orange headbands. Black shirts would be paired with fluorescent vests. What they really wanted to wear were grey sanitation worker shirts with orange striping, but "those are harder to come by than you'd think," Punkass says.

Largely, their peaceful protests have been police-free.

"Sometimes cops hate us, but they realize we're a performance group," Punkass says. "They have respect for us as a band, and try not to take one of us down."

If there's one band member immune to arrest, it's the "noise-generating cart." The cacophony-spewing contraption humbly began as shopping cart welded to a cow catcher, accompanied by a battery-powered speaker. Over the years, the cart has grown into a custom-fabricated fantasy worthy of a TV special. The cart now features flashing lights, FM receivers, a CD player, and a stereo system spewing weird blips and strange tunes to fill the downtime between marching songs. It even features a diamondplated deck (of metal, not jewels) for the fearless and footloose to dance on.

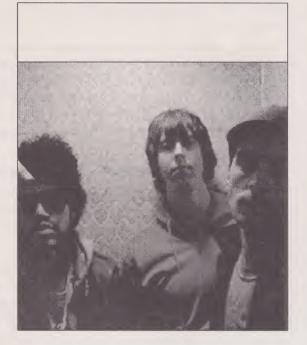
Unleashing sonic discord is hardly the only trick in the Brigade's bag. In 2001, the group marched with monster rockers Gwar in Seattle's gay pride parade, taking top honors. In 2002, they started a brawl at Washington DC's Waging Peace Festival. To commemorate the first anniversary of the WTO riots, they halted businessmen, handed them lengths of chain, held up glass panes and encouraged them to break "anarchists'" windows. "Lots of people took us up on that offer," Punkass says.

Such actions serve to blur the land to the Brigade's ulti-

mate purpose. Are they anarchists? A band? A little of both.

They've recorded several albums, including Vamos a la Playa (also recorded in Mexico) and Insurgent Selections for Battery and Voice, and have crafted a set of IO or so rabble-rousing march anthems. However, money and club gigs are not their motivating factors.

"We're stirred to perform by political and cultural uprisings, but being a band is what we do too," says Punkass. "We make public space truly public. We try taking a crowd and making everyone feel unified." -Joshua M. Bernstein



"Music goes in cycles."

THE EXIT RIDES THE RETURN OF NEW-WAVE WITH THEIR DANCEABLE, REGGAE-TINGED VIBE.

The Exit is a New York band with an '80s new-wave sound. This sounds typical of the last two years, except that the word "interesting" should be inserted somewhere in the preceding sentence. An exciting live band, The Exit's upbeat dub rock easily translates from the stage to the recording studio. Their sophomore release *Home for an Island* is out on Some Records, an inventive follow-up to their 2002 introduction, *New Beat*. With dueling vocalists and songwriters, Ben Brewer and Jeff Darosa, the tight vocals and wailing hooks are creative and catchy with a jamming reggae vibe. Brewer called me from New York to talk about his city, new album and it's title track's relevance to the US invading Iraq.

How important is being from New York to your music? Does the success of bands like the Strokes have any negative connotation for you? It depends on who you're talking to about what's negative and what's positive. I think that some of those bands get a negative stig-

Berkeley is his Baby (and he wants to keep it)

FAMOUS FOR HIS DRUNK-PUNK ANTICS, THE FRISK AND BLATZ FRONTMAN JESSE LUSCIOUS SOBERS UP IN A RUN FOR OFFICE.

hen Jesse Townley—probably better known to Punk Planet readers as Jesse Luscious—penned the lyrics for "Berkeley is My Baby (and I Wanna Kill It)" over a decade ago, it's probably a good bet that he wasn't thinking of running for the town's city council anytime soon. But in that kind of full-circle poetry that's so perfect that it can't possibly be real (but somehow is), Townley now finds himself—12 years after his legendary East Bay punk band Blatz released their last album—the Green Party candidate for the District 5 seat on Berkeley's City Council. It seems like a strange leap for a guy who used to be infamous for getting drunk and naked at shows, but

sitting down and talking with
Townley you realize that the past
is the past and it's the present
that's worth fighting for. Sitting
down and talking with Townley,
you realize that the power to make
real changes in your town, in your
life, in your world, are fully within
your grasp. You also realize that
he's no joke. The stick-my-dick-inthe-mashed-potatoes whims of
youth have been replaced by reasoned arguments, a cool temperament, and an infectious belief in—
as he puts it—"stepping up."

What made you decide to run for office in the first place?

Volunteering at Gilman Street [the volunteer-run Berkeley punk club] and seeing the gap between reality and the perception of some parts of Berkeley's city government about Gilman really spurred me into stepping up. At first I was just getting more involved in politics for Gilman, which made me really familiar with the different parts of the city council, then I ended up running Easy Does It, which is a disabled services organization out here. At Easy Does It, I had to apply for, negotiate, and win a contract with the city. That was the final building block to saying, "OK, I want to run for City Council." That was in 2000. It's been a long, thought-out process.

So how has the process differed from what you expected?

It's a lot funner. [laughs] People are really excited to have a new choice. You have to understand that my district is a moderate district—which in

Berkeley means it's more conservative, but in the rest of the country it would be liberal Democrat [laughs]. People who I've never met, we meet, talk about my campaign and my vision for the future, and they get really excited. They give a donation, they put out a lawn sign, they offer to host a house party. They're really excited to step up and get involved. For me, I'm used to trying to motivate a more sullen, funnyhaired, loud-music-listening population, so it's really nice to be able to walk in and connect with someone 40 years old, who may not be a music fan at all, and get a connection. People are really eager for that. With the horrendous national-and in California, state-wide-political situation, people are glad to find people who are down-to-earth.

Did it take a while to convince people to take you seriously?

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ma just because they're really successful, others are just not that good. I don't roll with that scene. New York is an essential part in who I am, Gunner is, and Jeff is. While it's really important because of the vibe of the East Coast seeps into our music, it's not important because of those bands.

When New Beat was released in 2002, you received comparisons to the Police and the Clash. Was it a conscious decision to steer away from that sound on Home for an Island?

No. All we've done is continued on our natural course. We refined our sound in the way we wanted to be heard. I think the reason for the Police and Clash comparisons are because we have the same influences. I still think we're similar to those bands in the sense that they're both really good live bands and listened to a lot of reggae and a lot of dub, which came out in their music. The thing about those bands is they both have their own sound because they were listening to a lot of different types of music. Where we are, me listening to dance music and reggae records all day and Justin listening to folk, coming together at practice we put it down together.

Yeah, but that ended really quickly. I think our main opponent is pretty bummed that he has two contenders who are taking this much more seriously than he had hoped. He was basically tapped as the successor for the outgoing council member, and I think he thought it was a slam-dunk, but then these two challengers came along. The other challenger is from the right of him, a conservative democrat, and I'm from the left of him, a progressive democrat. Walking door-to-door and talking to people on their doorsteps, it helps people realize that you can be taken seriously. And so far-knock on wood-local coverage has been positive. Whether or not they give me a chance or not is a different thing.

When you initially decided that you were going to do this, how much did you worry about if the

antics of Blatz—the nakedness, the beer, and all of that—would come back to haunt you?

The first thing my campaign manager asked me was, "What can these guys use against you?" [laughs] One of the local papers, the more moderate one, their first editorial that mentioned me said that one of their staff members had seen me naked before, but because it's Berkeley, that might be a positive! I'm completely upfront about it. There's nothing to be ashamed of; there's nothing to hide. All those different bands and shows and tours really helped me to learn how to deal with people-club owners, patrons, people who wanted to know if we partied with Filth [laughs]and it added so much to how I learned to look at things. But if it does come up, it'll come up at the end. I'll call it art, call it self-expression, call it

Why do you think that music like the Police and the Clash and other 80s punk acts are more relevant in music now than in the past decade?

Music goes in cycles. It's like the Renaissance is in cycles, the dark ages are in cycles. It's all typical.

I was reading an interview you did in July where you said that the first time you played "Home for an Island" was when US forces invaded Iraq and you felt there was a significance. What do you feel that significance is?

It's significant to us because we as Americans were being pulled into something we knew we didn't feel was right by a man we didn't elect. When you're a person or musician or artist, all you really have to console you is your art because it is the way in which you vent your frustrations and everything. We watched our country commit a war crime, an act of terrorism, and we'd written this song. It was like "This is our new song, it's called 'Home for an Island' and this is our reality." It was important to me because it was a moment in which we were able to vent our real frustrations with what our current sound was. It wasn't like "Hi we're the Exit and we're at war." —Trish Bendix

creativity, and it's proof that you're running scared if you have to pull this crap out. I'm not too worried about it, and even if I was worried about it, I couldn't do anything about it anyway! [laughs]

What kind of advice would you give to folks interested in doing something similar?

Just step up and start talking to people in city governmentyou'd be surprised at how quickly you'll be involved. Most of the people that I know have never been to a city council meeting. Everybody that steps up and goes down to City Hall or approaches their local representative and says, "I'm a young person and I want to learn more" or "I really care about this issue, what are you doing about it and can I help out?" They're going to be really well received. If you step back for a second you realize we have

to get involved. We're the next generation, and if you don't step up, someone else in our generation is going to, and we're not going to like who those people are. If we don't step up, then we're going to have to play catch-up. Local politics are not glamorous, but it's a heck of a lot of fun. There's less attention, but you're also a lot closer to creating real-time, real-word solutions. You can put together a property tax measure; you can get funding for this really important program; you can help strikers against local businessmen trying to break their union. You can do all those things. People take from the national and statewide political scenes that it's all about big money, but on the local level it's really not. At the very least, you can be damn sure neighborhood associations need volunteers, they need help. It's all



"The idea of rock music about Jesus Christ was intriguing to me."

WITH WHY SHOULD THE DEVIL HAVE ALL THE GOOD MUSIC?, A PAIR OF INDIE FILM UPSTARTS LOOK AT THE CHRISTIAN ROCK UNDERGROUND.

ost of us have had at least a passing awareness of the growing influence of Christianity on a certain fringe of the indie and punk scenes over the last decade, with a few bands breaking out among wider, mainstream (read: secular) audiences. Three years ago, Chicago residents Heather Whinna and Vickie Hunter—neither of whom would call themselves Christians—took notice of this seemingly contradictory phenomenon (Jesus' teachings meets Satan's music) and got intrigued. Unlike the rest of us, the pair, who had never worked a camera before, decided to make a film about it. The result, their spirited documentary Why Should The Devil Have All the Good Music? premiered in August at the Chicago Underground Film Festival, where it won the Audience Choice Award. Partially shot at the Cornerstone Christian music festival in Bushnell, Illinois, the film explores a complex and developing independent rock scene, allowing practitioners and proponents—as well as a few skeptical onlookers [full disclosure: our editor serves this purpose in the film]—to directly express their views without judgment.

about meeting people and then meeting their friends and their friends. It's like when you find a new band that you love and you look at their influences and then find those bands' influences, the same thing happens in politics.

So what happens at the debates, when your opponent starts quoting "Berkeley is My Baby" to you?

I'd say "And your point is? I'm here to talk about the tax measures on the ballot, I'm here to talk about medical marijuana, I'm here to talk about real worker power, about library services, about paramedic services. I'm not here to talk about a band I was in 13 years ago. I'm flattered that you're a fan, [laughs] but that's not why we're here today." —Daniel Sinker

"I am Good President Not."

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A GROUP OF PRE-TEENS DECIDE TO HOLD A PLAY IN PROTEST AGAINST GEORGE W BUSH? HINT: A LOT OF PIE TOSSING.

id anybody catch the recent Extreme Makeover: Home Edition when they renovated the home of that soldier stationed in Iraq? They sent the wife and kids off to Disneyland, and while they were gone the show arranged for the enlisted father to be shipped home courtesy of ABC/Disney. Then they erected the flag, built a baseball diamond in the backyard and, finally, the Brooklyn Dodgers brought Tommy Lasorda over so everyone could play whiffleball. The kids, the reunited parents, the show's hosts, the

Brooklyn Dodgers, and even viewers at home got misty-eyed as we pondered the wondrous spread of American-style freedom to other lands.

It was exactly this sort of insipid, transparent patriotism I had in mind when I devised the Radical Education Roadshow, a nationwide, variable curriculum, traveling corps of independent media makers who provide hands-on workshops and give readings to kids and young adults on making their own media. Such blatant propaganda, I felt, could be spotted by a

child, if only the child knew to look for it. That was the purpose of the Roadshow: to point out the propaganda that sneaks into kids' lives.

One program, a war symposium for kids in Kansas City, MO, was based entirely on examples like Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. I had envisioned a three-day program of media criticism that would turn youthful citizens into better-informed consumers and end with a creative, celebrational project. Yet when co-leader Jason Kucsma (co-editor of Clamor and The Zine Yearbook) and I arrived, the group of mostly 10- and II-year-olds instead expressed a dire need to see Bush voted out of office. Nothing else would do.

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Why did you want to make this film?

The idea of rock music about Jesus Christ was intriguing to me. Initially it seemed ridiculous; the idea of a band making records focusing on one theme seemed silly. I have also been politically, economically, and socially involved in political issues that I assumed was in direct conflict with Christianity. For most of my life, music was the center of my life. I take it's impact seriously and was curious about the growth of "Christian rock" in the mainstream. When I learned about the insular subculture of outsider "Christian rock," I was interested in exploring that scene.

Have you always wanted to make a documentary, or was this particular subject so compelling that it pushed you into it?

I had been interested in making a documentary before, about 10 years ago, but never made a serious effort to begin the project.

Was learning the filmmaking process difficult?

No. Just like every other large project I have tackled, I took my own life experience and convinced myself it would have the same principals. For this film, I made sure I involved a couple of people who actually knew how to use a camera. Otherwise we all "winged it."

Given that most indie and punk Christian bands tend to be pretty moderate about expressing their spiritual views, could you foresee the potential rise of more militant, intolerant Christian bands, such as what

These kids had already seen through the blatant propaganda in the mass media and had come to two rocksolid decisions: that the US would continue to have wars that would kill kids their own age for as long as Bush held power, and that our project would involve a pie fight.

We decided to hold a costumed, videotaped performance and make a flyer to advertise our project. "The Story of the Bush Puppet: Featuring Action, Adventure, and Romance But Just Kidding About the Romance," was the final title, and the flyer featured a small picture of a pointy-nosed leader explaining, in the uneven hand of an uneducated drunk, "I am good president not."

The performance was several different kinds of hilarious. With a logic that could only have been thought-through by a group of kids with nothing but pie-throwing and Bush-bashing on their minds, "The Story of the Bush Puppet" was a collaborative effort entirely conceived, written, and performed by kids at the Reading Reptile in Kansas City too young to vote but not too young to care.

The performance opened on a typical afternoon in the distant, unknowable future at the Restaurant and Hang-out for (Secret) Evil Dictators, who congregate at this eatery to argue how the world will be run. The hot topic was George W Bush—the Bush puppet—who was far too dam-

happened in the straightedge scene for a while?

That's an interesting question. Intellectually I would say yes, but my experience is that this is a youth movement, and it is one where their peers are often not Christian. Many want to be seen by their peers as equals. What I do imagine is that non-Christians will eventually begin to challenge Christian bands that participate in Christian events and that is where the rub comes in. At this point Christians in bands are not really being challenged on their personal politics and how they support them with their art. Right now, non-Christians seem to have a more junior-high response to discovering that the music they have been including on their mix tapes are about the writer's love for Jesus as opposed to his ex-girlfriend.

Do you think the film will influence viewers' opinions of independent Christian music? Is it meant to?

I couldn't possibly know. It is not meant to. It is honestly a film documenting an insular community that I was privy to.

Did you see any change in yourself—as a first-time filmmaker, or an afficianado of independent music, or even just as a human being—in the making of this movie?

Yes. I was reminded of my own prejudices. That's a good thing. If you are aware of them, you can decide if they are valid or you can work to overcome them. —Jon Resh

aging for even the US to take back. "He's already destroyed my country once, I refuse to go through that again," the behind-the-scenes dictator of the US proclaimed. From a neighboring table, the Crazy German Midget Dictator queried, "Are you guys fighting about who has to take in Bush?" The Orc Dictator and Elvish Dictator got involved too, as well as the Midget Princess Dictator. No one wanted to take in the damaging Bush puppet. The argument quickly escalated into an all-out pie-fight until all the pies-made of tissue paper and pie tins-had been thrown, retrieved from the floor, and thrown again.

In the midst of this battle, the British Dictator, a shy and

retiring girl, became unable to control herself and took a large lick off a delicious tissue-paper pie. Crying, "Mmmm! Pie!," she then keeled over dead (that she performed this act with her back to the audience diminished the impact of her death not one iota). Moments later, all the other secret, evil dictators died, too. "And so the argument was resolved," the narrator related-who, current events enthusiasts will delight, spoke with a heavy French accent. "Everyone died of food poisoning, so no one had to take in the dreaded Bush puppet. The moral of the story is that war doesn't really help anyone in the end."

The Vampire Dictator, immune to human death, rose to deliver this final coda:



"Everywhere there's people who will show up to get down, it's just a matter of letting them know you're coming."

GETTING DOWN WITH THE AFFLICTIONS.

t sometimes takes a miracle to make things right. Take the case of the Afflictions, a six-piece rock hootenanny, complete with tenor sax and keyboards, whose brassy explosion of heat and sound acts like a command, forcing people to drop their self-consciousness, put away their excuses, and just dance. As testified on their latest release, *Janet Style*, on Killdeer Records, recorded by Detroit rock producer Jim Thompson, the power of this band is its big, nonstop 4/4 beat, scientifically designed to get the people in the room hollering and stomping.

Why is giving strangers a chance to let their hair down and dance with each other so important?

The science of it is that we don't focus on the room. No, we focus on the three or four hopped-up freaks in the room that will dance

"Over the last three days, we've been working together as a group trying to figure out a way to explain how we feel about war to other people. This performance is the result of those three days of talks. We realized that we're very worried that George W. Bush will be re-elected and we're angry that he's lied to us so often: we don't like what he's done to the environment and the economy and we're scared of what he will do if he stays in office. Surely, he will continue to pressure us into wars: wars that kill other innocent kids and will, very soon, force kids just a little bit older than us to fight. We don't want this to happen. This is our future we're worried about. Thank you for coming. Vote November second.'

-Anne E Moore

"Beards make everyone look like Allman Brothers roadies.

GO METRIC! ZINE CELEBRATES IO YEARS OF BRINGING THE FUNNY TO PUNK ROCK.

That the world needs now is another music zine. No, really. A zine without pretense, a zine not so in love with music as to forget the simple, manic joy of crooning horribly over vocals you only half-understand, a zine exactly like Go Metric! edited by Mike Faloon. Complete with a daring wit, a vast musical history, and a broad spectrum of subjectseverything from a Beach Boys vs. Bikini Kill feature to a plot synopsis for the Scooby Doo movie. For the last 10 years, Faloon has brought a desperately-lacking sense of humor to the universe of self-published music zines.

You've been doing *Go Metric!* for a decade. What makes the zine different from other music zines?

I aim to put out a smart, funny zine that my friends will like. If others dig it too, even better. Most of the content revolves around music, but we include underground movies and comics and humor pieces as well. I say "we" because while I edit Go Metric!, much of the content is written by friends. And, like everyone else, I think my friends are the smartest, funniest people around. Unlike everyone else though, I'm correct in my thinking,

which is of great comfort.

Has your sense of humor ever gotten you into trouble?

I was suspended from high school for being involved in "a conspiracy to harass and intimidate the faculty." Big misunderstanding. It was a Watergate-inspired practical joke that went wrong. You can read the details in my one-shot zine, The U-Haul Adventures. I feel like I'm on a talk show, coming on after the guy from the San Diego Zoo, who's got a moorhen on his arm, and plugging my zine.

What's been your best interview in Go Metric! Why?

For the next issue I interviewed the Catholic Boys and the Bananas, but I think my current all-time favorite was with the Poptarts. They were

like escapees from bedlam even under the disapproving glares of the hipsters and yuppies—yes, we should class them together sucking on their beers looking weary. Sometimes the freaks get contagious and then *boom*, nuts start outnumbering prudes and Jeremiah's got a crowd to wrestle with.

Is dancing different in the various cities you guys have played in?

"Ain't no room in heaven for those that don't get down," so sayeth Sister Janet, our keyboard player. But you can't convince all congregations of this. Sometimes the lame hipsters are in charge; in these places it is prohibited to dance—unless you're ironically "getting down" to '80s hits at a "dance party," then it's permitted to not slump against the bar looking bored. Other times you get gangs of great kids who are still excited. I'm not sure it has all that much to do with where you are, though. Everywhere there's people who will show up to get down, it's just a matter of letting them know you're coming.

Your title song, "Janet Style," is all about the breakfast skills of your keyboard player, Janet. What's a good breakfast to you?

Here's a good one: Wake up with hangover. Moan. Clutch head. Curse a more or less random assortment of impassive gods. Shake fist at sky. Realize that exertion of shaking fist at sky is making you nauseous. Stop. Moan. Clutch head. Go to DeMars, or maybe Leo's. Order from the nice lady. Eat eggs. Drink coffee. Slowly. Pause several times to stare at plate or into cup. Make promises to yourself that you've already broken. Eat eggs. Drink coffee. Slowly. Pay the nice lady. Go home.

Every few years some critic decides that some new band is going to save rock'n'roll. How might the Afflictions save it? Mouth to mouth? Or maybe one of those ER electric shock things where they have to yell "clear"?

Beatings. Savage, senseless, beatings. It's the only language rock'n'roll understands.

—Joe Meno

an all-girl pop band from my hometown, Syracuse, NY. They were around during the late '70s, but it wasn't until the summer of 2002 that I heard of them. It was an amazing discovery. Not only do I love their music, but I learned a lot about Syracuse's once great local music scene, which is now dominated by hardcore knuckleheads and cover bands. Gael, the Poptarts lead singer, also shared insights into what it was like being in an all-girl band in the late '70s. She said that the Poptarts were told repeatedly that no one would buy records from an all-female band. Once you hear their music it's stunning to think that such wonderful songs went unreleased for nearly 20 years. She also told this bizarro story about playing a bar near an

Air Force base back in 1979 or 1980 and the guys, who had just been paid and were rip roaring drunk, ripped a urinal from the bathroom wall, flooded the bar and then tossed the urinal around the dance floor while screaming "Fuck Iran." The Poptarts had to run for cover.

OK, to end, let's play your favorite game: "Sexy/No Sexy." Answer either "sexy" or "no sexy" and give a reason why. Astronauts?

Sexy! I was born a week before the first moon landing. Plus, I love Man Or Astroman?, especially their last two records where they went off the deep end.

Pigeons?

No sexy. For all the obvious reasons.

Math?

Sexy! I thought about majoring in math—then I ran into calculus. That killed my interest in math. I think Mr. Barnett gave me a mercy "B-". There's no "fun" in "functions." Wait a minute . . .

Beards? On men? On women?

No sexy, for both genders.

Beards make everyone look like Allman Brothers roadies, and that's no good. Alan Parsons had a beard. Can you name a good Alan Parsons song? Neither can I.

The word "moist?"

Sexy. I think "moist" and I think "brownies," and brownies are best when moist. —Joe Meno

"Media is consciousness."

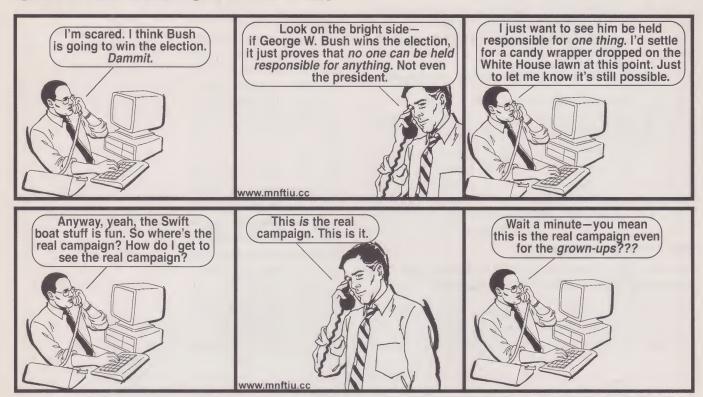
RAISING MEDIA AWARENESS—AND HELL—AT THE ACME SUMMIT.

With many bold (and often false) statements emanating from the shifty world of politics being repeated verbatim by the mainstream press, an upstart media organization is making a bold statement of its own,

and refuses to listen to the deluge of hype.

The Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME) held a "Declaration of Media Independence" summit at the University of San Francisco this summer. The two-year-

Get Your War On BY DAVID REES



old organization is attempting to assist in a proverbial jumpstart of the heart of global media and all those who pay attention to it.

"Media is consciousness," explains Jerry Mander, the president of the International Forum on Globalization and a senior fellow at the Public Media Center. "It is more important than oil and cars . . . Why aren't there demonstrations on the doorsteps of Disney and Fox? We all have to regard ourselves as media activists." Mander adds that the scariest media statistic of all is that eight corporations own 70 percent of all global media."

Mander says that it is dangerous for the well being of the American people to have such a lack of variety in coverage of news and other topics in the consolidated media.

"Mass media is a crucially important subject," he explains. "You have to look at the pathetic, irresponsible and tragic way the mass media reported the Iraq war: It has taken an extremely patriotic approach to the situation and it really reveals a lot of the power the media has to determine the direction of our lives."

Amy Goodman, host and executive producer of the radio show *Democracy Now!*, expanded on Mander's ideas at the conference.

"There is a reason that our profession—journalism—is the only one explicitly protected by the constitution of the United States," says Goodman. "It is protected because it is supposed to be acting as a check and balance for government, not acting as a megaphone for the government."

Goodman also points to how many television stations kept their coverage of the war in Iraq as clean as possible because companies that advertised on those stations did not want their advertisements directly following gory images from the war—"Media monopoly and militarism go hand in hand," says Goodman.

It's a problem that ACME hopes to help solve through its close ties with independent media outlets, groups and organizations, both locally and nationally. The group's mission is to encourage and accomplish media reform and outreach while inspiring the creation of diverse independent media. There are four action groups within the organization:

Media Literacy Education,

Media Reform, Media and

Public Health and

Independent Media.

To the people of ACME and a growing number of aware citizens, a cultural revolution is on its way. People can not be kept in the dark forever and, sooner rather than later, the media will learn once again to be responsible and to uphold its constitutional duty.

"We have to make our own media," says Goodman, "because it is the best way to understand what they're doing to us." —Ashley St. Pierre

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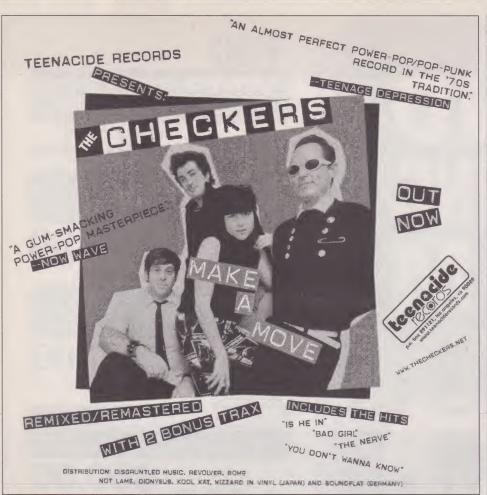
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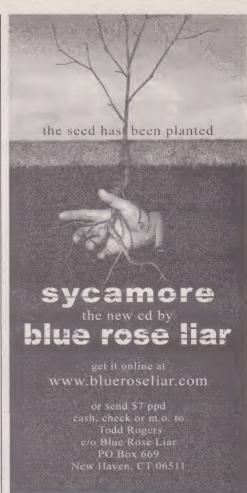
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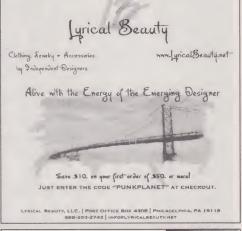
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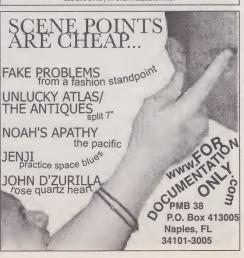






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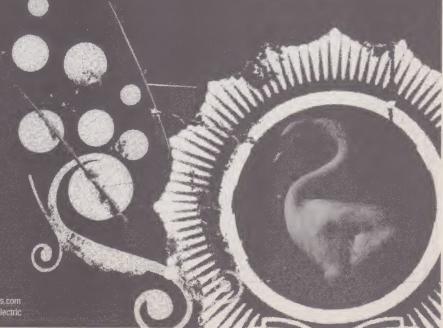
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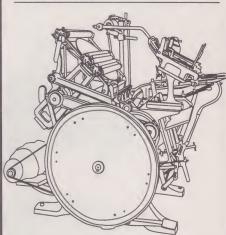
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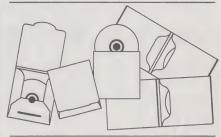




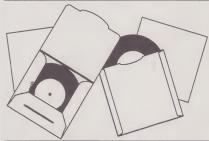
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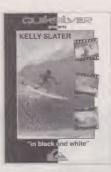
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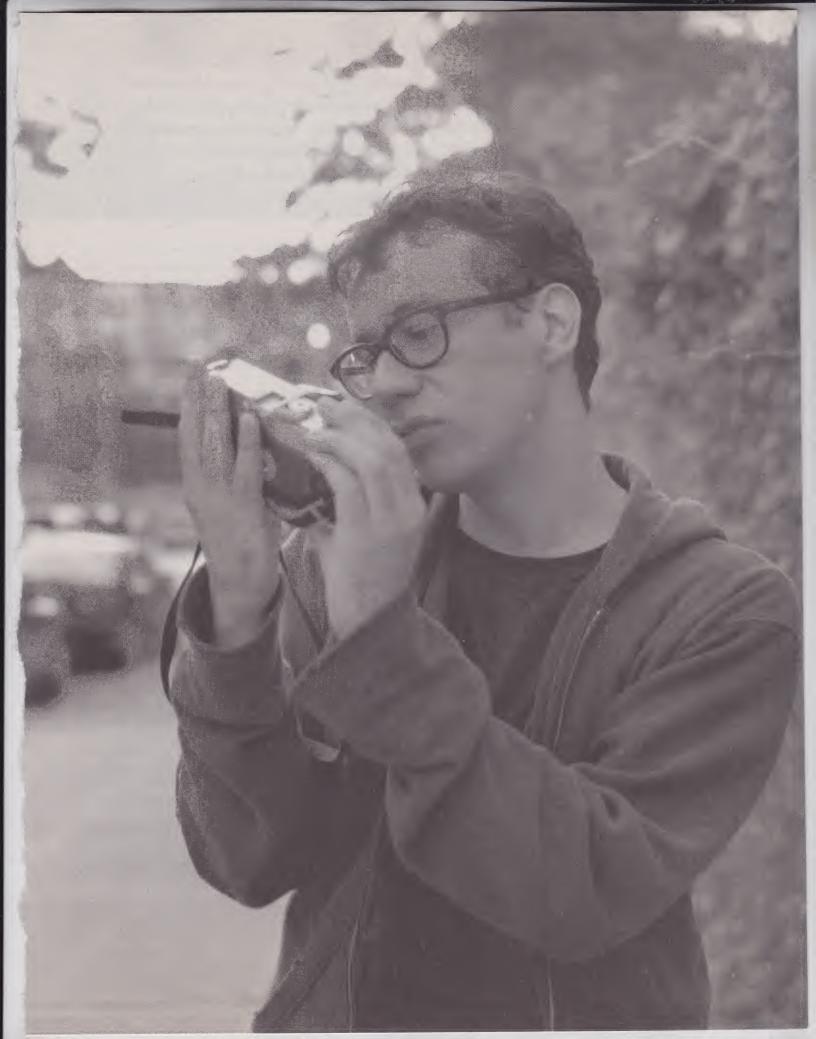
ARMISENT

hat was the best interview I've ever done," Fred Armisen says, zipping a black cotton hoodie around his slight and slouching frame. He's sitting next to me on a park bench along a curt stretch of trees and benches in New York City's East Village, where on a wall in the distance someone has painted a half-block wide portrait of the late Joe Strummer. For the sake of this article, it's worth mentioning that Armisen is kind of famous—he, like a few thousand other people in New York, can qualify as "that guy you see on TV sometimes" that you may whisper about to the person next to you when you see him waiting on a train—but for our intents and purposes, there won't be much of that going on. Right now he's just some guy I asked to meet me here in the park not far from this painting of Strummer, where he has just spent the past two hours floating his life's story into my tape recorder.

"For some reason whenever I get up onstage," he says pointing at the mural, "I think of Mick Jones." It's a nice little analogy that comes at the end of our conversation; in a few minutes we will decide to go our separate ways. There will be some general pleasantries exchanged, some polite small talk about the loose ends from this interview that need to be stitched up, and then I will turn off my tape recorder and slip it into my courier bag, at which point Armisen's face sours and his mood suddenly begins to change. He calls me an asshole. His voice rises. He tells me that, in fact, this was the worst interview he has ever done and that he hates this magazine and all that it stands for. Then Armisen lets out a guilty smile.

He's just kidding.

Okay, so that's the catch phrase he puts on every few weeks in front of a live studio audience and his preying on my nerves is just something he hasn't ever really managed to get out of his system. This is very much a "Fred" moment we're having here and the reason I feel the need to tell you about it now is because it's not all that different from how Armisen became kind of famous in the first place. Discovered two years ago by Lorne Michaels in the midst of a talent-searching dry spell for Saturday Night Live, the 36-year-old accidental comedian has become a distinct presence on and off the show for his ability to both mimic and manufacture the bizarre characters and uncomfortable moments that have lined his unlikely ascent.



But perhaps what has been even more unlikely is how Armisen has chosen to deal with all of this sudden attention. He's a punk lifer who spent his last winter break from the show touring with art rockers Les Savy Fav. He filmed a small part in the movie *Anchorman*, though partially because he enjoyed ribbing the film's writer Adam Mackay (a Washington DC native) over the fact that he never listened to Nation Of Ulysses. He also wanted me to mention how much he loves Sleater-Kinney. And you wouldn't believe how excited he was to be on the cover of *Punk Planet*. No kidding this time.

In a way, Armisen has waited his entire life for this: born from a mixed bag of ethnicities in the suburbs of New York, Armisen was reared among a very funny and very musical extended family (his grandfather even choreographed dancers in Japan). It wasn't until he was in his teens that Armisen would begin playing music of his own. He mimicked the great Tito Puente as a boy and discovered the first wave of punk when he grew old enough to work a steady job; relating not with its fuck-the-man sneering, but instead with the considerable way it could entertain.

Armisen was able to do just that with the Chicago band Trenchmouth, whose blistering stage presence quickly made them the kind of band that could be perfectly surmised as "some shit you just had to see live." Leaning closely to the sort of theatrical post-punk of the day (at the very least, it would seem his bandmates listened to Nation Of Ulysses), Trenchmouth clearly benefited from having more than one natural-born frontman in the group. Expanding over the course of four records, Trenchmouth (which was lead by singer Damon Locks, now fronting the dubby indie band the Eternals) never did become famous, but that's not so bad. Armisen would fare much better without them.

When the band disassembled in the late '90s, Armisen more or less found himself playing with friends out of habit, eventually following a group of fellow musicians down to Texas in order to attend the South By Southwest conference that digs its heels into Austin's nightlife each spring. On a bit of a lark, he purchased a video camera and began documenting the panel discussions and insider elbow-rubbing that he would crash with a rotating set of fake personalities. The resulting video mocked the music industry with such comic aplomb that, when Armisen began screening it in clubs around the country under the obvious title Fred Armisen's Guide To South By Southwest, it instantly became an inthe-know classic. While the video's highlights were in great abundance, a particular scene involving Rolling Stone senior editor David Fricke and then-Capitol Records-president Gary Gersh in which Armisen asks them to full-mouth kiss in front of a room full of journalists seems particularly telling. Very few realized he even had this sort of menacing humor in him, but soon this would be exactly what people would come to expect of Fred Armisen.

Following the tape's underground success, he moved to Los Angeles to see what the entertainment industry had to offer. There were some scattered performances across town, but for those who frequently read this magazine his most visible appearance probably came in the Wilco documentary *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*, in which he suggests to lead songwriter Jeff Tweedy that his band could be more successful, if only they issued "compact discs." Still, many were looking to

"Since forever I have wanted to be famous . . . I was always trying to get attention. I still believe that if you're a drummer you should try and get as much attention as you can."

be in the Fred Armisen business; he signed a contract with Comedy Central to develop his own series, but that hit a large brick wall when he received a call from Saturday Night Live encouraging him to head east. Armisen landed a reoccurring role just a few months after joining the cast, when his Fericito character (in all of its "I'm just keeding"-absurdity) became something total strangers would ask him about on the street. This was his breakthrough moment and the character, as these things go, was perfect: a drummer who doesn't realize how funny he actually is.

Even with all of the particular curves his life has laid before him, it's not where Armisen ended up that's the most fascinating: it's where he began. So when he sits here next to me in New York talking about how he hopes to spend the next 10 years of his life trying to create comedy sketches that feel like Devo records, you really begin to understand how all of this has come full circle. We don't often know what to make of those who positively crave the spotlight, and Armisen makes no qualms with the fact that it is such attention that gets him out of bed each morning. If that seems strange to you, that's probably because you weren't born that way. Armisen never had much of a choice in the matter and while what follows can often feel like a wellmannered run through his personal history (if not necessarily the best interview he's ever done), know that there is something inherently deeper at play. We're talking about Armisen and the very unique life he has been able to lead, sure, but beyond that is a story that each one of us can claim ownership of.

This is not just a man talking about his career, it's a story about those who sweat the best years of their lives away in a van or in front of a computer, unsure of what else they have to offer. It's something you can still find in the kids who come out to the shows and cheer on their favorite punk band night after endless night, until they are kids no longer. But mostly it's about the road all of us will one day have to walk down in search of our own identity. Maybe it's suiting, then, that the person we find our story in is someone who has landed a pretty decent job pretending to be someone he's not. In many ways, Armisen's greatest virtue has been his ability to place himself outside of our society, mocking its foundations in ways that are both humorous and humane.

Funny, right? You signed up for an interview with a comedian and it turns out to be a tale of embracing the chances in life that we are all mysteriously given. Maybe you didn't realize you were getting yourself into any of this. But neither did Fred Armisen.

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**Portraits by **Chrissy Piper**



One of the things you've said about starting a band was that you always wanted to be famous . . .

Did I really say that? [laughs]

I still have the article somewhere if you want to see it.

Since forever I have wanted to be famousthat's true. Even in Trenchmouth I would stand up a lot and talk into the microphone, much to the dismay of some of the other people around. [laughs] I was always trying to get attention. I still believe that if you're a drummer you should try and get as much attention as you can. If people are coming to see a show, play your fucking drums. Don't worry about the backbeat and keeping it tight, just draw some attention to yourself and make a racket, because that's what the drums are there for. I think that's what drew me to people like Dave Barbarossa of Bow Wow Wow-he was an entertainer and that's what I wanted to be. Where that came from, I don't know. Yeah, I wanted to be in a famous punk band. That's probably a sad thing to say.

It's certainly not something people say to me very often when I'm interviewing them for Punk Planet.

But that depends on how honest you are. Fame doesn't necessarily mean red carpets. Every band I've ever met likes a good crowd and everyone likes a little attention or acknowledgement. That's fame—or at least it's a type of fame. The type of fame that I wanted in Trenchmouth is the type of fame that we got: People came out to our shows, people wrote to us, they bought our records, and that's all that I wanted. But I think there's a funny malfunction in my brain that makes me love attention. Maybe

it was chemistry or maybe I didn't get enough of it from my parents when I was little, but I love it. I get nervous if I'm not receiving it. I don't know if that's a good thing to want or if it's a good thing to want to do, but that was one of the goals I had.

Were you ever afraid that would get in the way of what you were trying to do?

Why would it? It was the fuel.

But obviously Trenchmouth was a small band and if you were constantly searching for attention—and I don't want to sound really flippant about this— it only provided a small amount of that.

In a way that's what made me realize that I didn't want to be in Trenchmouth anymore. We were going along at this pace and we were doing fine, but I felt like a lot of bands from our hometown were doing a lot better than us in a shorter amount of time. I didn't want to become the old guy in a struggling band. There's nothing wrong with getting old and playing music, but I knew that, at a certain age, I didn't want to be where Trenchmouth was. I'd see these bands and I would think, "We did fine, but why not close up shop?" I would have rather tried something else than struggle with it any longer. I hope that doesn't sound . . . [twists his face.]

You really shouldn't be afraid to say something like that.

But it is a selfish thing to say. I wanted to do something that there is an audience for; I didn't want to play to nobody. Look at the results? We broke up the band and then I found other ways to do what I wanted to do. I feel much happier now.

Did it seem like you were alone in that feeling?

At the time that Trenchmouth broke up I

would say that we all felt like it was winding down, but it may have only been me who was searching for other things to do. I think we would all agree that it was the right time to end it. I didn't get an argument from anyone saying that it wasn't the right time to do it. There wasn't any one person who said, "We have to stay together."

How old were you when Trenchmouth broke up?

Damn, I don't know . . . I think I was 29.

That seems like a natural age to reach that particular crossroads.

I was certainly at that age. I remembered touring with certain bands and I would specifically watch drummers; I would look at the way they would carry stuff around and I just knew it wasn't for me. I would look at them and say, "I don't want to be that guy." I think you can grow old gracefully and your hair can go gray and your knees can ache and you can still play music, even punk music, but the way that we were going it really could have gone the sad route. I saw some drummers and I was just like, "That's not who I want to be," and there was a good chance that was going to happen.

Did you ever feel like you had failed with Trenchmouth?

It would have felt like a failure had it gone another IO years and I was sitting in front of you right now saying, "Yeah man, we have a new seven-inch coming out and I really hope that people are going to buy it." [laughs] But it wasn't a failure: I got to hang out with some of the funniest guys in the world, I got to play the drums a lot, we toured like crazy, we paid our rent, and we put out records. It was everything I ever wanted. Up until that point I was cool with it. But it hit that point where I knew we



Trenchmouth photos courtesey of Damon Locks

couldn't continue on and, as crazy at it sounds, it was training me for comedy. There's an audience and equipment to know and you're joking around—all of that stuff was definitely part of the mix, but I never felt like a failure. Especially when we played. Some of the shows we played were awesome. I remembered playing shows in Minneapolis and feeling like there was nothing better. It would have been nice to sell more records, but I guess it wasn't meant to be. Besides where would that lead us? Even if we had done as great as the Jesus Lizard, would I be doing all that much better right now? I don't know about that.

What happened after Trenchmouth has become the part of your biography you've had to summarize the most frequent.

You mean with the tape from South By Southwest and all of that?

Right. So instead of telling me the condensed version of that story for the millionth time, why don't you tell me something about that time that often gets left out of the story?

Huh... What gets left out? [pauses] One thing is that the person who was doing all of the camera work at the time was Sally Timms [of the Mekons, who was then Armisen's girlfriend] and I was kind of having a rough time with her. It was not going well. She is in some ways one of the best friends I've ever had, but at that point it seemed like it could have gone much, much worse. But still she helped me with that videotape. It wasn't just me looking for all of these funny things to do, she had ideas and she helped me get into some of these seminars. I guess that's the thing I don't ever go into: My time at South By

Southwest wasn't all just goofing around, I was having a really hard time.

Breaking up with someone and then going on to become sort of famous for this thing you did together \dots

Yeah, I know.

That must have been a very peculiar experience to go through.

Things were definitely bittersweet. What I learned from that was that you never know; you can have all the plans in the world and . . . How can I say this without sounding mystical? I am not a spiritual guy, but sometimes life has another path for you. It's kind of cool, I guess, but sometimes you think you know it all and then life shows up and says, "Actually, what we had in mind is this." Really, the only reason I was going to go to South By Southwest was to play with Sally, but then they gave us this South By Southwest program that had the titles of all the seminars going on and there were so many seminars with these names that just blew me away: "How to do an interview" or "How to make it using the Internet." It really moved me how wrong all these seminars were. So even though I had no money, I decided that we were going to buy a video camera and go to these seminars and ask all of these crazy questions. That seemed like such a no-brainer to me. That stuff was all just instinctual and fun. You have no idea how these things are going to work out. Even now I have plans and I have to stop myself and say, "What are you thinking?" It doesn't always go that way.

What else did you have planned after Trenchmouth broke up?

I had a salsa band I was going to put out some records with, maybe get out on the road. I wanted to be the leader of a band this time around. But you never can know for sure. It makes me happy to be alive, just realizing that at any age this can be exciting, and amazing things can still happen to you. That tape turned my life around and made me so grateful for those few days in Texas that I was doing it. Somehow something good did come out of it. [pauses] Man, I can't believe you're asking me these questions.

What do you mean?

No one has ever asked me what I was going through personally when I made the South By Southwest tape. [laughs] Ever.

Why do you think that is?

Maybe it's because I come from a comedy background. People who talk to me now will have these very standard questions where they really don't know that much about me. That's fine. I don't expect people to want to know everything about me. For all I know, someone could have given them a one-sheet and they're just going off of that. I'm not going to complain about the fact that a lot of questions I get asked are just about how I got to where I am. I can't imagine that people need that much information about me, anyway.

But the part that really interests me about your story is where this left you and how you found your way out of this obviously troubling time.

What do you mean by "troubling"?

You weren't feeling troubled by all of these sudden changes?

No, I don't think so. For all I knew everything



Trenchmouth "wasn't a failure: I got to hang out with some of the funniest guys in the world, I got to play the drums a lot, we toured like crazy, we paid our rent, and we put out records. It was everything I ever wanted . . . But it hit that point where I knew we couldn't continue on and, as crazy at it sounds, it was training me for comedy.

was going great. I had a job and I was still enjoying myself. It didn't feel like I was in the absence of anything. But in a sense you're right. I guess with the band finishing up and my relationship shutting down, it could have been seen as some sort of crossroads.

Out of which you became a stand-up comedian.

Right. [laughs]

How exactly did that happen?

I made that tape in the beginning of 1998 and by the end of the year I was showing it in clubs. But there was this one club in New York that I couldn't show the video at because they didn't have a projector, so I had this idea to do a fake self-defense class. That might have been my first real performance. Either way, a few months later in Chicago, John Langford was putting on a show at a place called Schubas and I came to him and asked, "Can I do this thing I've been working on about a self-defense class?" It had become an obsession. I kept thinking, "OK, I have to do this thing. There will be a band playing and I'll do this joke self-defense class and it will work out great." There was no trepidation. I just wanted to be a part of something.

Which basically pushed you into a profession that could be best summed up as fucking with people for a living.

[Laughs] I really loved doing it. I definitely liked fucking with people, but I never wanted to be mean to anyone, I never wanted to insult anyone. All I ever wanted to do was draw some sympathy for me from other people, even if I was pretending that I was retarded and stuff just to draw people in. I tried not to be mean,

although I probably failed at it. I know that Gary Gersh was not into [his role in Guide To South By Southwest], but talking to some of the people from the tape later on it seemed like they understood it and they were fine with it. For me it was such an easy route to take. I was always doing that stuff on the road and with the band, and it has never been any different. When someone from one of these shows would come up to me and say, "Would you like to do this for us?" I didn't realize that I was even that good at doing it. But if they thought I was good enough to do it then why not do it? It seemed like a good idea.

When that happened, you ended up moving to Los Angeles, right?

Yeah, I packed up everything I owned and I drove my car out there.

What did you expect would come of your life there?

The only thing I remember was saying, "I'm going to live here forever." Everything was winding down in Chicago; other bands were just starting off, I guess, but for me the only people I had there were Steve Albini and his girlfriend Heather. I felt connected to my ex-bandmates and to Sally, but that was about it. I was kind of gone, so I saw this as an opportunity to move out of there. I really didn't want to live the rest of my life in Chicago. It's a great city, but I was there for fucking 12 years and that's enough time to spend in any one place. I had to get out. ¶ Plus, I loved Los Angeles. I love driving around and listening to music in LA, there's just something about it. There's this feeling of euphoria you get driving around LA. I just wanted to live there forever and work and work. I really have a hard time with leisure. I wanted to work on something every day.

People always paint moving out to LA as this very careerist decision.

Which is so wrong.

But that's exactly what you did.

I never saw it as being the only place you could go to do comedy. To my very core I always wanted to go there because I honestly thought it was an awesome place to live. Maybe subconsciously I knew, but I never thought to myself, "Okay I got to get out to LA and audition right away and really make it." It was more like, "I got to keep this thing going somehow." It came to me as a surprise that I was in the game at all; I was still fresh from playing the drums, but there I was sitting with David Cross and Bob Odenkirk and talking to them for real? That was a trip.

Did you have any hesitations about entering that world?

Are you kidding me? I'm in love with it. The gates of Paramount Studios in Los Angeles make me so happy. I loved going into the huge studios where they would shoot this stuff. I would go off into the back lots and there were all these realistic New York City buildings or suburban houses—it was great. If for some reason you are seeing it as an evil Hollywood corporation, that's fine, but I see it as a city built on art. These are all just people who had magazines or college films or bands, and everyone is just trying to make stuff. I'm not against that at all. I'm glad that not everyone is drawn in to



Photos courtesey of Fred Armisen

that, because I'm completely drawn in to it. I am in love with it.

Your whole career up until this point seemed very accidental.

It was to a certain degree.

When did it stop feeling that way?

The first time it stopped feeling that way was when I had to sign a contract with HBO. I had to draw up the budget that they were going to pay me [for a string of shorts that ran on a program called HBO Zone] and I had to start hiring a producer and a camera guy. It had become work. I had to start thinking with math! There were all these numbers that I had to deal with now, and they kept asking me for more pieces. It didn't feel like, "OK, here comes my career in comedy." But if I didn't hand in those tapes I might have been sued. ¶ These were all very easy decisions for me to make. "You want me to get a video camera and mess with people? Absolutely. Where do I sign?" But there were points where I would think to myself, "I can not believe that a person who has ever met the Ex is taking a meeting at Fox." It seems like another world, but you'd be surprised. It's really not that bad. You'll eventually end up meeting someone else who knew the Ex or stayed at their house.

You never called yourself a comedian as these things went along, but when you got to Saturday Night Live I imagine that you finally had to admit that you had become one.

That definitely changed everything. Before, I would always say that I was just doing "projects." I never walked around thinking about how I'm such a funny guy.

It was more like, "I wonder if I can convince this person I'm whatever I'm supposed to be." But you're right, I didn't expect that to happen so quickly and I was definitely taken aback. But that wasn't my problem. I was like, "You are the ones who wanted me and you have seen what I can do, so I hope this is enough for you." [laughs]

Still, you must have felt pretty unprepared.

But I definitely felt like I could be convincing as a character on television. I had done it on a couple shows and I just thought that if this is what it takes—if I need to dress up in a costume and talk in an accent—then that might be OK. But it was still a surprise and it was only afterwards that I found out all these people in the cast had come up doing improv shows or that they had taken all of these comedy classes. For me it was just like, "OK let's see how this week goes."

It seems fair to say that the way you went about your career before Saturday Night Live was often as simple as a band setting up a show.

Yeah, it really was as simple as that.

Do you long for that sort of simplicity anymore?

I guess it really wasn't that simple. Back in the day when I would find a little room and I would ask them if I could play, I would really think about who else was performing. I wanted to know, "What can I do that's going to get people's attention and that's going to seem like it's real?" I paid a lot of attention to it and put a lot of work into it. But I'm still careful about it. It's really not that different now, except that there's a camera filming me. I still think the same way. "What am I going to do this Friday and how am I going to

make this work?" This is something I will always take seriously.

You really don't seem like you've strayed too far from that particular path—whether it was with your music or with teasing total strangers.

I don't think so. As much as they do feel like separate lives to me, I've kind of been the same person all the way through. When I was in Trenchmouth, all I thought about was "How can we tour some more? How can we put out some more records? How can we record?" It was all about that. But both of these routes were so inviting to me, it really did feel inevitable. All the things I liked were what I gravitated toward no matter how much my parents didn't want me to. I was always drawn towards music and comedy and performance. I knew I was going to stand by all that stuff and be near it. It was either going to happen or I would make it so.

Was there anything you were put off by when you started at Saturday Night Live. Obviously you hear people say things after they leave and . . .

[interrupting] There was nothing.

Really, not a single thing?

I'm telling you the truth, man, when I say that it is nothing but fun to be there every week.

I guess to me there's something about how the cast on that show always has to push a catch phrase. It reminds me of when I talk to bands and they tell me that the major label they're recording for sent them back in the studio to record a song that's more appropriate for radio. It sounds so discouraging.

But I like catch phrases, you know? I feel

"I remember one time when I was driving with Damon in the van and he asked me, 'How do you see yourself in the future?' Off the top of my head, I said to him that I wanted to be like Bill Murray when he goes on David Letterman . . . I always envisioned myself on television."

like when I come up with a costume or an idea they're going to let me do it. I've never been told that an idea was too crazy. They've never said to me that I need to settle down or watch my language or anything like that. ¶ And I've always wanted to be up there. I remember one time when I was driving with Damon in the van and he asked me, "How do you see yourself in the future?" Off the top of my head, I said to him that I wanted to be like Bill Murray when he goes on David Letterman. I wanted to be the kind of person Bill Murray is. That was the first thing that came out of my mouth and that was ages ago. Damon probably wouldn't even remember that now. I always envisioned myself being on television.

You seem to take a lot of joy in retelling this story.

I'm sure I do.

Why do you think that is?

Probably because I still get freaked out by it. I still remember walking down the hall at NBC thinking to myself how fun it was to just stand there in front of Lorne Michaels and all these people and to be psyched to be there. When Marci Klein, who is the head of talent there, stopped me in the hallway and was like, "What's this about us not being able to have you until January?" I was floored. Because I was under contract with Comedy Central at the time, I couldn't do anything for any other network for a while. But when she said those few words, "What's this about us not being able to have you," it dawned on me that they actually wanted me to be on the show.

And that was it?

Later that night I went out to dinner with a couple of other people who had auditioned and she called me on my cell phone right there. I still have the number she called from saved in my cell phone under "best call ever." [laughs] It's still in my phone! It was such a big deal for me. It was like being asked to be . . . I don't know, the president of the world. What do you say? That sounds a little crazy, but sure. I guess I'll go do my thing.

There is a very movie script ending to this story. It doesn't seem like most people would come to you thinking that there's a lesson here to be learned.

Are you asking me if there's a lesson to be learned from my story?

I am going as far as to say that there is one.

I think there is. I learned a huge lesson about how it's never too late and how things can be really fucking incredible if you just let them be. Maybe it's because I haven't done this that long, but every free airplane ticket that I get in order to do a show or every time I get to do comedy in front of a new group of people, I always feel like it is the coolest thing in the world that I get to do this for a living. I don't know what it is about performing in front of people, but I just love it. I have so much fun with it and with watching other people do it. So I feel incredibly lucky, and I don't feel any sense of entitlement about it. I really appreciate the whole thing.

How much do you attribute what's happened in your life to the time you spent in a punk band?

Every time I step on to a stage I feel the little punk rock guy in me. It's the same movements even. It's the same walking up to the microphone and standing under the lights. Every time I have to suss out a situation that may be too confusing for me, I just think, "What if I was in a band?" If I were writing a sketch and the sketch got changed in some way, I always think "That would have been me doing a drum part and having to slow it down." Even in business transactions, I immediately revert back to a line of thinking where I would wonder, "What would happen to the band if this happened? What if we opened up for so-and-so?" I still break it down in punk band territory. I understand that better.

Do you think that's something you will ever be able to leave behind?

It will never go away. Plus I always liked the look. [smiles] I always got to keep my fucking hair short. Keep with the black clothing.

That's a little scary. [Jaughs]

What do you mean?

I guess it's just more something that worries me. For the past five years I've been interviewing bands for *Punk Planet* and as I find myself gravitating toward older people who have managed to stick around—whether that be you or Nick Cave or Billie Joe Armstrong—I feel like I'm looking to them in order to learn how much things actually change. So far the answer has been not very much. For me that can be frightening. Does that really mean I am going to be the same punk kid writing about bands 10 years from now?

But that's something that is going to be with you even if you're not that person.

You think?

Well...I know that it's going to be with me until the day I die. ⊚

BALLING BALLING

ou can flip the page as many times as you like (or maybe just roll your eyes as you read on), but there's Taking Back Sunday staring back at you from the pages of Punk Planet. There they are, standing there looking pretty in their designer jeans with the sort of perfectly unkempt good looks that one can only muster when you roll out of bed from your bunk on a well-stocked tour bus. Yes, when Taking Back Sunday released their debut album Tell All Your Friends on Victory Records over two years ago, it wasn't exactly the sort of album that regular readers of this magazine fell head over heels for. The lyrical vision of the band's then 19-year-old singer Adam Lazzara, Tell All Your Friends was a pop album in a confused hardcore band's body and it went to lengths so discomforting in order to purge its emotions—the messy break ups, the soured friendships, the hiccupped vocals—that I could never summarize it all in the introduction to this interview. It seems safe to say that a lot of true punk fans hated it.

But for others, there was a record that had to be listened to over and over again, which is exactly what I did while driving the freeways of Los Angeles, stuck in an airport in Texas or at home when no one else was around. *Tell All Your Friends* was more than a guilty pleasure or another part of my day job (as a freelance writer who often has to trail these sort of bands around), and whether or not people gave it credit for being so, the record mapped out an overview of male regret and pride unlike nearly anything else in recent memory. Certainly at points Lazzara's lyrics sounded downright appalling, and the fumbled explanations for a proposed video for the song "Cute Without The 'E" (in which, by Lazzara's design, a cast of girls were to square off with the band ala Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*) made it hard to dispute *Tell All Your Friends*' sexist leanings. But

there was also a lot of bravery buried beneath the surface, and upon the release of the band's second independent album, Where You Want To Be—which in a sad bit of irony contains the rather memorable refrain: "I never made a scene/They came to me"—I decided to take a train to a teen center in suburban Connecticut to talk to Lazzara about all of this for a magazine that he's always admired from a distance.

"So is this really for *Punk Planet*?" he asks as we take a seat in the sun away from the makeshift stage where they would be performing later. "Growing up in the South, I was living three hours away from the coast where there was just one record store. I remember going there to get the new *Cometbus* and *Punk Planet* and checking back every week. I was really into the DIY world so it's very cool to do be doing this."

When I ask if he was even a little suspicious of me showing up here today, his response was that "we're used to people talking shit about us." That's the sort of hindrance that will always exist for a band like Taking Back Sunday, and reading over our conversation now, I can't help but feel a certain sense of innocence being lost. There are moments in this interview that I've felt before while talking to other modern emo bands—the typical explanations of growing up and falling out of love—but to continue to dismiss Taking Back Sunday as another replaceable band within this genre, well, that would be a fucking shame. Lazzara may always leave a wrinkle in some punk's brow, but over here in the sun you can't help but to take interest in the scenes he makes. What can I say? I came to him.

Interview by Trevor Kelley
Photography by Adam Lowe





The last time I saw you in Los Angeles you were wearing a shirt that said "Asshole" across the front of it.

That one is packed in my bag right now actually. [laughs] I have another one that says "Hypocrite" and when we played at Roseland in New York with Saves The Day, I made a shirt that said, "Did you hear what I said about him?" I have a whole arsenal of them. I guess for a while I was poking fun at all the people that put so much stock into what they read on tabloid websites. Rather than walking into a room and acting like a dick to those people, I'll just make a shirt. It's like, "If you're going to say that stuff, well, here's some more fuel for you."

Do you really assume that people think you're an asshole?

Yeah. I do.

[Laughs] That seems like an awful thing to carry around.

But I spent a lot of time acting that way. It wasn't all the time, but for a while there were things that I was doing that . . . I don't know. [sighs] It was clear to me that I had a lot to learn. There was a time where I thought I knew everything and now I realize I don't know anything. It was just like being in high school and not feeling like I really fit in anywhere. We would be touring with certain bands and I would see how they were acting and I would think, "Oh shit, maybe I should do that now because that's what dudes in bands do." This just caught us off guard. It was like getting sucker punched.

How much do you think people's perceptions of you have to do with the lyrics on *Tell All Your Friends*?

There will always be people who take what you say the wrong way, but it really seemed like it had more to do with my onstage antics than it did the actual lyrics on the record. There have been some people who got the wrong impression or who thought we were really violent or something. But look at us! [laughs] I couldn't fight anyone. I have never personally run across anyone who took it the wrong way.

So no one has ever said anything to you about the lyrics?

Never.

I find that really hard to believe.

There were a couple of things that I wrote that were pretty racy and I've had people say that they thought I was way into sex. But I'm not, really. I actually think it's kind of boring.

How do you look back on the person who made *Tell All Your Friends*?

I feel like I was a little kid then. If I had the chance to write the record again, I would have probably paid more attention to the fact that everyone is human. I do think that I neglected that point.

Your old girlfriend has probably heard the record by now. Did she ever tell you how some of these songs made her feel?

She definitely called me and asked, "Who the fuck do you think you are?" It seemed like this ridiculous thing to her and I guess her feeling was that you should tell the story straight if you are going to tell the story at all. Obviously I thought I did that, but that's only one side of it and she didn't think it was fair at all. That's just how I felt at the time. It's been years and we're older now. The only difference for me is that I have this forum that other people are privy to. It's not just stuck in my notebook.

Was there ever a thought for you about what impact the lyrics might have?

Everything that appears on the record is straight from my notebook. I usually have two notebooks on me and there are just stacks of notes everywhere in my house. I took all that stuff straight from them, but I didn't sit down and think too much about it.

Do you regret anything you said?

I always told myself that if I could help out someone the way Lifetime helped me, then I would have reached my main goal. I didn't think anything that would come out of my head or out of my mouth could be something that anyone would be into. The song "Ghost Man On Third" was probably

one of the most personal songs I have ever written. I've had people come up and show me tattoos they have of lines from that song. I have lyrics from a Lifetime song tattooed on me, so I know what that means. To think about it in a way that something that I wrote meant that much to someone else is crazy. ¶ I don't regret anything that I said. Looking back I realize that it's just as easy for me to make mistakes as it is for the people I was writing about. I'm just as capable of the same things. In that aspect of it I wish I had pointed the finger inwards a bit more. That was selfish of me.

You probably didn't read the column that ran a few issues back in *Punk Planet* about emo being sexist.

No, I didn't. But somebody recently asked me that in an interview and I was just like, "What?" You can't just say that emo is sexist.

Of course you can.

But if you want to go and single out sexist music, then everything out there is sexist. Why is it that if you have a guy writing a bunch of songs about how a girl hurt his feelings then all of a sudden it's sexist? It's just a song. I do think that it sucks that there aren't more girls starting bands and being involved in the scene because it really is overrun by males. Can you name me five bands that are in this scene with female vocalists? I can probably name two.

But that's one of the points that Jessica Hopper was trying to make in her column. The very fact that neither of us can name more than a handful of emo bands that are fronted by women suggests to those very same women that they don't matter or that there will never be a level playing field. Doesn't that seem like a fair point to make?

It does, but I don't see where we are singling out females to the point that they don't feel like they matter. If anything, when you get down to the root of it a lot of these songs wouldn't exist if it weren't for women. [pauses] I feel like I could really go off about this.

You must be glad you never went through with

your original idea for the "Cute Without The 'E" video?

Not at all! One way to look at it is that it was a literal way of showing that women are just as strong as guys are. There is nothing a guy can do that a girl can't do. With the girls beating up the men and them beating up the girls, it was a way of showing that there's really no difference between the two genders. But if we were to do something like that everyone would be like, "Fuck that band! They're actually beating up women in their video." ¶ It's a constant struggle for me to realize that you can't please everybody. There's nothing worse than to walk into a room full of people and for the majority of the people in that room to have a certain idea of you.

Those are the kind of people that don't understand why I love *Tell All Your Friends* as much as I do.

You do? [laughs]

But I feel like if I say too much about the record it's just going to make you feel awkward.

No. it's fine.

Well, one of the things that was important to me about *Tell All Your Friends* was that as much as it could be seen as the cause for all this "Is emo sexist?" talk, it was also an answer to it. The thing that people often missed is that the record, in a lot of ways, was about confusion and weakness and being a man in this society where you are being told time and time again that this isn't how you deal with these situations. In the end, we're the ones that are weak. That was an unbeliev-

ably honest statement about manhood for me.

But don't you think girls feel the same way? I realize that the record as a whole was angry and bitter and all of that, but they feel all of that stuff, too. I've always thought that everybody feels that way. If you sat down with a woman who got mauled emotionally by some guy and she was pissed enough about it, then she might say the same exact same thing. It would only depend on how many people were listening to what she had to say about it.

When you look at a handful of the hallmark bands that played this music—bands like Lifetime or Jawbox—there was an element of sexual confusion to what they did. In a real genuine way they dealt with how you can respond to these situations even though they inherently flaw you.

Yeah, they did.

That's what I heard in Tell All Your Friends.

But this is just what came out. Most people, whether they are guys or they are girls, feel like they have to portray themselves in a certain way. [pauses] I keep trying to take myself out of it and think of how they would feel. The only times you will catch me being brutally honest about myself are in my books of crappy handwriting and bad poetry or whatever else I use to write songs. I honestly never looked at this in a worldly, "What are other people going to think about it?" kind of way. It was more of my personality coming out.

Would you agree that you could only make a record like *Tell All Your Friends* once?

I read somewhere that Tell All Your Friends had become a staple or a classic in this genre. I remember reading that and just thinking, "Come on!" I don't look at Tell All Your Friends that way at all, just to be clear. I don't want to cheapen it for anyone. I was talking to someone yesterday and they asked about one of the songs on it and I was like, "Look, one of my favorite bands of all time is Lifetime and if I was to ever meet Ari Katz and I had the gall to talk to him, I would never ask what any of his songs were about." For IO years of my life he meant so much to me and if he were to tell me what those songs mean to him . . . man, I wouldn't want to know.

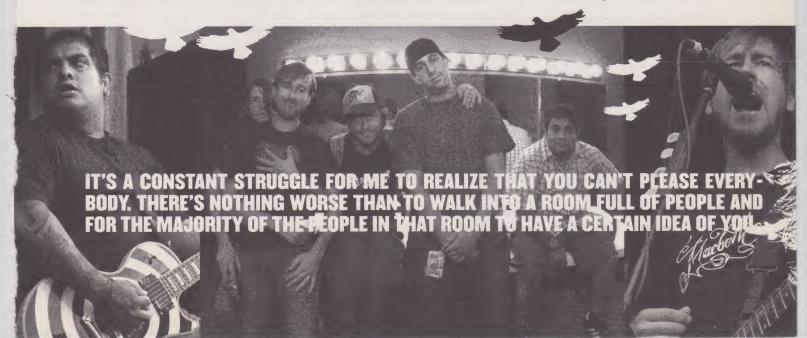
It has been interesting for me to finally hear your take on these songs. It seems like you put a lot of thought into the issues we're talking about here, probably far more than people give you credit for.

But I don't think I deserve credit for anything.

Come on now.

It's like I told you before: growing up I had parent issues and because of that, the person who knew me the best was a girl. I got to hear her side of things and it didn't become something I walked around all day thinking about and wondering, "OK, how can we solve all of these problems?" But it is part of who I am. People may look at us as just a pop-punk band and nothing more, but so be it. That's fine with me. That leaves a lot more room for the people who do care. [smiles] And I would much rather hang out with them.

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of the Midwest. It becomes easy to believe that you are the only survivor of some silent doomsday event. With the shadowy features of mile after mile of this vast nothingness, a kind of unfamiliar fear sets in: there's no one to talk to; no one's ever going to hear your voice again; you are alone in an almost Biblical sense. That kind of silence signals an important understanding that, when the end does come (which in these bad days seems all too easy to imagine), the result will be punishing quiet.

Like no one else I know, Anders Nilsen is not afraid of being quiet—at least not in his work as a comic book artist. The creator of the book *Big Questions*, a nominee for an Ignatz Award for new talent and outstanding comic, Nilsen's new book, *Dogs and Water*, depicts the struggle of one young man and his dog, lost in a strangely lovely but eternally apocalyptic world. Nielsen's art is filled with amazing white space showing a true sense of human loneliness. Above all else, the work echoes our need to be heard, even if it is only by ourselves.

Interview by Joe Meno

How did you first start making your own comics?

I guess I started making comics in high school. I had an English teacher who let me do assignments as comics. I did an arty zine in college with comics in it, and started doing narrative paintings as soon as I had the freedom to in painting classes. Those paintings eventually turned into The Ballad of the Two Headed Boy, though that wasn't published until a few years later. I still thought I was going to be a "real" artist when I finished college, but without the structure of school that kind of work began making less sense to me, while the comics I was doing in my sketchbooks and the children's book I did for my little sister began making more sense. It was a much more direct way to communicate ideas, and it felt more like play. I started photocopying the stuff out of my sketchbooks and sending it to friends and it ballooned from there.

Your work synthesizes so many disparate elements together. Who are you drawing from?

Influence is a hard thing to unravel. My influences comics-wise are anything from the X-

Men and Frank Miller to Edward Gorey, Tintin, Raw, and Chester Brown. As far as the kind of stories I end up telling, the slightly surreal—for lack of a better word—slightly epic and slightly theological nature of things like Grimm's Fairy tales, C.S. Lewis, Greek and Norse mythology, Giotto and other pre-Renaissance painters. I listen to books on tape while I work, too, and some of that subject matter, which leans toward philosophy and religious and political history, ends up in the work.

Your work both is very novelistic—a slow unfolding of the story with many, many characters—and also very cinematic with excellent point of view shots and a wide sense of physical space.

You used the word cinematic. I do try to think about enveloping the viewer, sucking them up into the story the way I loved to be completely absorbed in a story as a kid. That's certainly what a good movie does, but I am very interested in provoking thought as well, leaving the reader with something on their mind and something that they can relate to, either about themselves or the world. I hate it when you go to a good epic movie and get completely sucked in and when it's over, you're just spit out into the world again which is left seeming drab and boring. A good story should involve you actively. It should inspire you and make you see the world differently. It should help you see the world as being better, or at least more interesting than you thought. ¶ As for the different points of view, I used to think a lot about visual equivalents to the extremely dramatic emo and punk music I used to listen to, and how changes in rhythm or tempo or volume could have visual or narrative equivalents. In a nutshell, I think a more regularized point of view or scale allows for a more subtle, possibly psychological, storytelling-details of gesture or expression will

be noticed. A changing point of view and scale dramatically lends itself to more action and can make something simple seem dramatic.

Tell me about your new book, *Dogs and Water*. It seems similar to *Big Questions* in the sense of its very mythic loneliness and the very epic pace, but with the character's conversation between himself and his backpack, it seems almost like a monologue. What's this one all about?

It started as two really simple little strips about how ridiculous it is to be an artist, to think that your little take on the world has any merit and will get you anywhere worth going, but also about the fact that you'll probably end up going there anyway. Years after I did it, I was asked to do a story for a new anthology for Drawn and Quarterly and since I had no other good ideas, I turned to those two little strips, thinking they had some potential to be expanded. Two years went by, the anthology came and went and the strip indeed expanded and metamorphosed a lot. It still has a grain of the original subject, but also deals in a roundabout way with the war and other things. ¶ The idea of the monologue holds a lot of interest for me. I'm working on another thing right now, it will probably be a book next year, that's filled with several interconnected monologues, all set toward the end of the world. Monologues are a little closer to having an actual conversation with the reader and less like setting up this contrived little play-act for them to watch and interpret



passively. It sort of ends up making the reader almost a character in the story.

What else did you try to do differently with this book?

There are no panels. All the images float on the page. I'm interested in the effect that has on how the thing is read, but it also just makes composing the page easier—it's not so architectural. Otherwise this story is the longest completely self-contained thing I've done. The structure had to be tighter than, say Big Questions, because I had to think about a beginning, middle, and end, all the way through. Big Questions tends to sprawl a bit. It has structure too—I know where it's going, ultimately—but I've left myself much more room to let the story go where it will on the way there.

In both works, there is a massively dramatic aircraft crash either as resolution or the start of the action: any connection between this narrative device and the events of September 11?

Two things. First: Everyone loves to see stuff crash. It's just the most basic representation of violence and drama you can get. It's all about intensity of experience. Second: A couple of months ago I was try-

Anders Nilson

I used to think a lot about visual equivalents to the extremely dramatic emo and punk music I used to listen to, and how changes in rhythm or tempo or volume could have visual or narrative equivalents.

ing to get started on a story about Icarus, and as I got into it realized that all my stories are basically Icarus stories: People who get a little too big for their britches and then crash; stories about humility and arrogance, or just not respecting your limits. It's a really compelling subject for me for whatever reason, though I've worn out my welcome with the larger aircraft crashes for a while. The airplanes and stuff also have a slightly different cast, though perhaps retaining related subject matter, post 9-II. I actually did the plane crash drawings in Big Questions before that, so I don't think of it as being related, whereas with the scene in Dogs and Water, while I didn't intend it to relate specifically, if people read it that way, that's fine. @

cot Jenerik, Randy Yau, and Jim Haynes do not consider themselves musicians. Jenerik often concocts metal percussion pieces meant to be played while doused in fire, sometimes shooting sixfoot diameter flames. Yau fancies himself a practitioner in the art of "Aktionism"—bludgeoning a microphone to dear heaven with a scream and nothing else. Haynes sees beauty in rusting, recording the squeals and rickets of metal as it dissolves in an ambrosia pool of chemicals. These gentlemen distance themselves from the limits of music—aiming instead for the endless and often baffling, frightening, yet enticing frontier of sound art.

Of course, they're not the first to explore the medium of sound. In 1915, Italian Futurist composer Luigi Russolo, titillated by the noises of factory machines, urban bustle, and trains of his everyday life, wrote his manifesto, "The Art of Noises." He argued, "Today, noise triumphs and reigns supreme over the sensibility of men." Manipulated electricity, magnetic recording tape that can be spliced and stitched into collages, and American composer John Cage's written score for four minutes and 22 seconds of silence subsequently entered the equation beautifying noise and sharpening the human ear to reality, even if it's distorted beyond belief. The ideas of sound art sometimes leave fingerprints on mainstream rock and hip-hop, but the artform never gives listeners easy answers, nor lives to merely entertain.

Jenerik, Yau and Haynes want to encourage more people to think beyond music and its rigid template of rhythm and melody with their nonprofit arts organization, 23 five. Since its 1993 inception in San Francisco's industrial-noise scene, 23 five releases sound art to the public through CDs, gallery installations, books, performance festivals, and studio workshops. Their projects range from the "10 Hours of Sound" series, where they organize 10-hour listening sessions of sound art from a specific country at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, to leading school kids on field trips to local

forests with tape recorders in tow. It may seem a far cry from the sonic sensibilities of copper in acid, but 23five exists to make you see that it's not that distant at all.

Interview by Cameron Macdonald

What led to the formation of 23five? What does the organization contribute?

Randy Yau: 23 five was originally founded as an organization to educate the public about sound art and all of its forms. We're one of the few organizations in the US that really focuses on sound outside of music. We're interested in sound as a medium. It's a pure focus; we don't promote what's normally considered to be music. Obviously, there's always an overlap with experimental music and electronic music, but we're primarily looking for people who only have a close focus on the power of sound itself.

Jim Haynes: I can certainly give you my faded impressions of what 23 five was doing back in the mid-'90s, as I had gone to a lot of 23 five events long before becoming involved with the organization. From what I understand, 23 five originated out of a community of artists who resided at the Illinois Street warehouse in the Bay View district of San Francisco. I remember going down there when I moved to San Francisco and experienced Survival Research Laboratories for the first time. Along with SRL mechanical devices spewing flames and stalking each other, the event was populated with numerous events with throbbing noise emanating from every corner of the gravel lot outside the warehouse. Along with the sound elements, videos and films were being projected throughout the open space, and there seemed to be a never-ending cascade of televisions tumbling from the roof. These were still plugged in and carried an image as they plummeted to earth. Upon impact, the images were supplanted with a cascade of sparks. Events such as these crossed a lot of boundaries between what

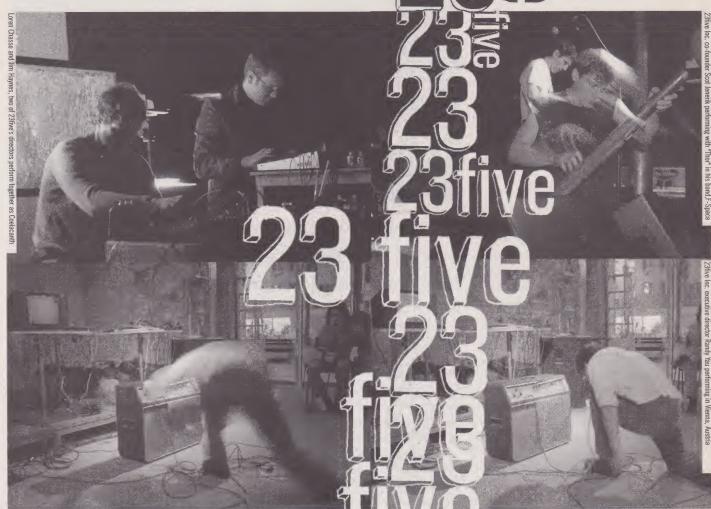
was performance, cinema, music and sculpture; all the while keeping a jackbooted, punk-as-fuck snarl.

Jenerik: At our inception there was very little sound work being performed in San Francisco. There were a few artists, but overall the scene was rather fragmented and the sound at the performances was usually pretty bad. More often than not, the performers played through guitar amps. This included renting-and eventually buying-a high-quality PA system for all of our shows and actually paying the artists for their performances. ¶ One of our early major endeavors was the Sound Culture Festival in 1996. We were one of the five host organizations for a 10-day festival in San Francisco that focused on sound produced by Pacific Rim countries. This festival included 32 presenting organizations from all over the Bay Area and about 1000 or so artists from Japan, Australia, the States and other Pacific Rim nations. Along with administration duties, as part of the festival we hosted the Listening Room-10 days of recorded soundworks-an exhibition of sculptural packaging for CDs, albums and cassettes, and two nights of noise performances at the Cyclone warehouse space.

Sound art is often considered to be a negation of music in general. Does 23five follow that notion? Is sound art intrinsically subversive?

Yau: 23 five is not really interested in the negation of music. We support a lot of music projects that want to totally negate music, and a lot of directors on the board like Scott Jenerik and myself are noise artists who do very extreme stuff, but the purpose of 23 five is to really broaden people's minds about sound and to educate them beyond the negation of music. A common misconception of noise or sound art is that it's just a bunch of people producing cacophony that either makes a political statement against everything or a demonstration of why they can't play their instru-

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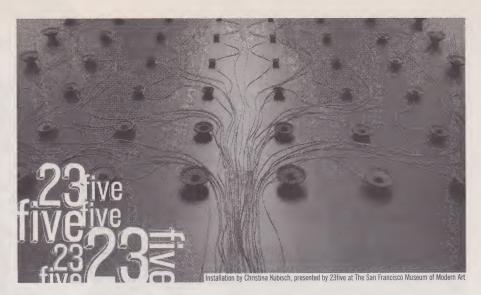
five five 23five 23five ments. 23 five's purpose is to show a true aesthetic and a language that is evolving under the term "sound."

Haynes: I don't think that there is anything subversive about sound art, unless the author imparts a subversive text. It's the same with film or writing: There's nothing intrinsically subversive about it. That said, sound is much less specific in its ability to signify and declare meaning, and that ambiguousness easily lends toward mystery, which lends to conspiracy, and on to subversion-all of which is a subjective view from the audience's perspective. I love the poetry of sound and its ability to move in directions that are unpredictable, but I would never qualify anything related to music as being intrinsically subversive. In addressing your comment about sound art as a negation of music, I will just give deference to the pithy statement from avantgarde composer Edgard Varese that music is organized sound, thus situating music as a subset of sound. By extension, sound art is a subset of sound.

Jenerik: Sound is in the ears of the beholder. I got interviewed by one of the local TV stations while I was out running the other morning. I went by the I-IOI freeway and they had the TV crew there. They said, "We want to talk to you about noise pollution and how horrible it is." Of course, my response is "I'm a noise artist and that's what I do. Running by the freeway is like listening to a symphony. I love the sound of the oscillating frequencies of the tires and the engines." It really comes down to being educated enough and open enough to the genre to understand and enjoy it. I'm sure that the intent of some artists who are working with noise is as a negation of music, but it's very individual. To me, it's just another form of expression.

Do you think sound art has advantageous qualities over conventional music?

Yau: Sound art's advantages are that it forces you to let go of any preconceived notion of what music should be. You're forced to really go down to the base of what you're hearing and to really experience it and grow attentive to the world's sounds. Sound art's biggest problem is that a lot of people expect an answer for why this sound



We're one of the few organizations in the US that really focuses on sound outside of music. We're interested in sound as a medium. It's a pure focus; we don't promote what's normally considered to be music.

it is or letting go and experiencing it with your body.

Jenerik: I would say that sound art has a distinct disadvantage. People are extremely busy in their lives and they have very little time to actively listen to something, myself included. I always have music playing, but it's usually in the background. At times I'll even play noise in the background, but the whole nature of the medium is something that deserves and needs your attention.

So then how does it work introducing those concepts to kids?

Yau: Loren Chasse leads these listening programs that force kids to listen to their environment and realize the sonic potential of everything. On listening trips, we take kids out to the Marin Headlands, for example, and teach them how to be attentive listeners. There is no speaking during certain parts of the trip; they must listen to the sounds around them like the crunching of leaves and walking. We give the kids tape recorders and let them goof around with it. Then they bring back their recordings to our digital sound studio and create a composition. We also do blindfold tests, where participants have to walk blindfolded and use their ears to navigate. With a lot of people, their eyes

the long visual history that we have, where visuals overcame sounds. However, the ears are just as powerful as the eyes.

What made 23 five decide to reach out to outside the insular underground noise world in the first place?

Jenerik: Part of it is that we just care about the future of sound. You look at the next wave of kids, and it's essential to let them know from a very young age that you can do this, that this is something acceptable to do. Music is really boring these days. Everybody is doing the same formula. I just read Lexicon Devil, the story of Darby Crash, which happened, what, 25 years ago? So, I listened to the Germs and now to some of the other punk bands coming out today and all they are doing is repeating the same music over and over again. A lot of people working with noise are interested in asking "Where else can we take noise, besides repeating the same thing over and over again? One of the greatest things about noise is that anybody can do it, but also one of the worst things is that anybody can do it. That's part of the need for education, where at least through exposure, hopefully some of the next wave will go on to produce some really interesting compositions.

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lizabeth Elmore never stops-talking, playing, recording, and simply doing. She's one of those people that always bites off a little more than she can chew, but somehow finds a way to take one more little nibble-like in 2003 when she scheduled to record an album with her band, The Reputation, during her last semester of law school at Northwestern University. Elmore, who used to front the band Sarge, addresses the oftvisited theme of relationships gone wrong in new ways on The Reputation's second album To Force a Fate (Lookout). Elmore is a dedicated, conscientious, punk rock smarty-pants, who is clearly obsessed with doing the right thing, whether that means staying on an indie label, or working herself into the ground to get everything perfect, hardly realizing that this single-minded focus is a rarity.

While home in Chicago for a brief few days in the middle of their most recent national tour, Elmore talked up a storm about recording the new album, the evils of major labels, and her own songwriting inspiration. Though just listening to her left me exhausted, I'm selfishly grateful that Elizabeth works so hard, because anyone who hears the gorgeously angry pop-onspeed breakthrough that is *To Force a Fate* will reap the rewards of her hard work.

Interview by Rachel Kramer Bussel Photography by Andrew Ballantyne

Can you tell me about the process of writing the new album and how long the recording took?

It was a different process overall than anything I'd ever done before. In general, I'm a slow songwriter, and we kept thinking we'd be ready to record an album by August [2003]. We had three songs and we'd been messing around with them for months. In August, we got a couple more songs together, such as "The Ugliness Kicking Around," which I wrote over the summer while drunk late at night. I'd just bought the keyboard and was going home every night and smoking in my room and drinking beers and playing the keyboard with headphones. ¶ I was in law school when we were touring, so I was already working IIO hours a week. I didn't have time to write and I wasn't inspired to write; my life wasn't interesting enough to me that there was anything I really wanted to write about. But when August came around, and it was time to make our schedule work, I knew we had to go into the studio as soon as I finished finals. Because of that, I couldn't make it this really intense I'm-gonna-sit-bymyself-and-play-guitar-for-hours process. When songs like "Face It" come to me, I can write them in five minutes. They're so dumbed down and fun that they write themselves. ¶ I'm still definitely the main songwriter, but this album was a far more collaborative process. It's weird because I feel in some ways less connected to the songs because I didn't spend those hours by myself at home writing and rewriting. If they were people, I don't feel like I know them as well as I know my other songs. But on the flipside, they're cool because what makes them good is everyone's voices within the song are so much stronger. ¶ The recording process was in some ways the same thing. I was far less micromanagey because I couldn't be. I had two 50-page papers to write while we were recording the record. For the first three weeks of recording, I was spending 14 hours a day in the studio and another four or five writing-it was insane. To me, recording a record is the most draining process of my life. There were times when I was like, "I don't care, I can't deal with this." I was half dead. I just said, "Do whatever the fuck you want, record it, find a guitar sound you like, put it down, add something extra-I don't care."

Is it worth it to you now to have done that to yourself?

Yeah, because we got a record and we got to go on tour and the record came out and I graduated school. I didn't graduate cum laude, I was really sad about that for a while-it was a goal of mine since I started law school-but when you're so invested in every aspect and you're listening so hard, it's really draining. ¶ For instance, at some point we had to play a show and I had been up writing my finals for two days straight. When I got up in the morning, I was sick-I puked. The guys picked me up, put me on the practice space floor, piled their coats on top of me, and practiced without me while I slept there for two hours. When we played our show, I was delirious the whole time.

You talked a little about playing the key-

board—there's a lot more of it on the new album. How long have you been playing?

Actually, piano is my first love; I started playing when I was six and I was extremely serious about it. I was really good when I was a kid and it kind of bums me out because I know enough to know how badly I suck right now at it.

The keyboard really makes the song "Ugliness" powerful when you see it live—the way you pound that piano, I don't think you can really do that on a guitar.

I'm proud of that song. I liked writing that song. I was just going home every night loaded from bars and sitting with beers and an ashtray and the keyboard and playing. At the end, I knew I wanted it to turn really ugly, so the instruments step out of key with each other one at a time. I'd never tried to do anything like that before, but I had this idea in my head, because I wanted it to be ugly. At the end, you get to completely let go and just bang, which is fun.

With that song, and on the album as a whole, you have some pretty powerful lyrics going on. There's definitely some pretty harsh sentiments—what inspired you to write them?

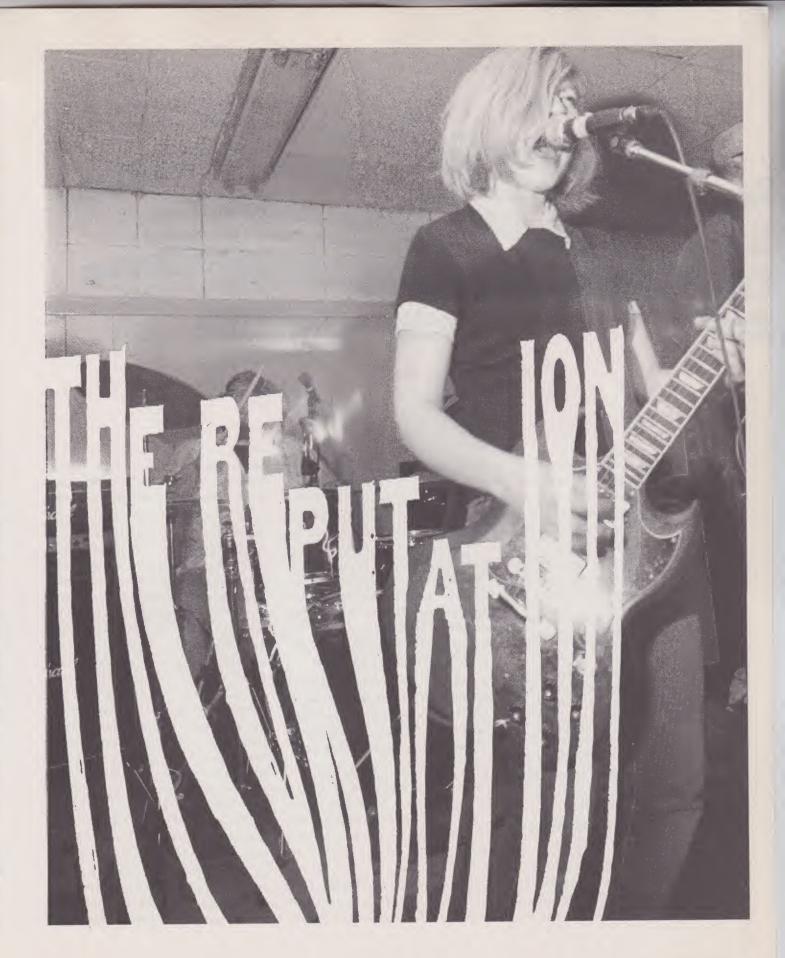
On a lot of my records, there've been songs that have been about me getting a little bit hurt. I quit dating five years ago pretty much completely, so on this record there are more songs that talk about me hurting other people than me getting hurt. ¶ We travel so much and I feel like I've hurt people probably more sometimes because I'm interested in getting to know them and the experience but it doesn't necessarily mean I'm falling in love with them or anything. Not a lot of guys really like me, but the ones who do occasionally seem to tend to fall pretty hard, and it makes me feel terrible because they're people that I genuinely like. I guess I feel guilty when I recognize that, when it comes down to it, I don't feel that much in that way at all for anyone, ever.

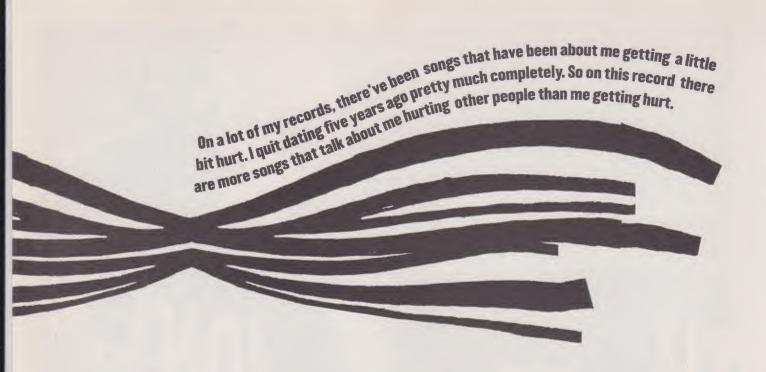
You mean in general?

The guys in my band think that I'm emotionally unavailable.

Well when you're working 110 hours a week, where you would you have time to . . .

Exactly. I'm pretty focused and probably





kind of cold in some ways. I know what my priorities are and nothing interferes with them. It's got to be IOO percent right—95 percent isn't enough. I think because I know that, it means that most things are not going to work out. I don't want to hurt people's feelings. I don't like mine getting hurt, but I'd rather somebody hurt my feelings than I hurt somebody else's.

Does it bother you to write and perform songs that are so personal in front of an audience, or have you gotten used to it?

It's not like I've ever written a song while thinking "people are going to hear this, this is what they're going to get out of it." I don't think about other people when I write songs. Whoever might end up hearing it never even enters my mind because to write a song is private. No matter how much you are going to make it public, the process itself, how it comes up, is so private.

Do you always write from personal inspiration or is it ever fictional?

It's always personal. I tend to sometimes write songs where I'm another character in the song, so it's a true story but I'm singing it from someone else's perspective, which is

a way of hiding myself within the song so it's not first person for me. ¶ On"Cartography" and "Lasting Effects," there's nothing specifically true in terms of the factual settings, but they feel totally true to me in terms of a whole mishmash of experiences coming together in my brain. "The Uselessness of Friends" felt completely true to me but some of the actual details and settings were fictional. The opening verse never happened, but it's the way what actually happened felt to me, which is the best way I can explain it.

You went from Initial, which put out The Reputation's first self-titled album, to Lookout, a much bigger indie. What made you choose Lookout and what's it been like working with them? Would you ever sign to a major label?

I feel so freaking lucky for the labels I've been on. I always think that if you're on a label where you know they're good people, that they treat people well and they're in it because they totally love it and they like your band and they like you, that's all you can ever want. Parasol, they're some of my best friends in the world still, and Initial, I met them back in the Sarge days, and they're amazing and they love their bands and they

work so hard. It's nice to be on a bigger label, but that's not the most important thing. ¶ We had a one record deal with Initial, we love them, and I've got literally zero complaints. They busted their ass on a band that nobody had ever heard of. But I think there was a thing where they have a very specific following—which is diversifying really rapidly because of the bands they're signing-but it may not have been the perfect fit for us as a band. We weren't out label shopping, however. It's not like I expected Lookout was going to want us. I didn't know anyone at the label, I just got an e-mail from one of the owners of the label back last January and we talked off and on for four or five months and they made us an offer. Once again, I feel so freaking lucky. ¶ They've got a bigger staff by far than any label I've ever worked with, so it's very compartmentalized, everyone has a very specific job. It makes my life a lot easier because I do all the business shit in the band. And interestingly enough, which I didn't even know when we were talking to them, but basically the entire label is run by women. It wasn't until the CD was coming out that I thought "wait, everyone I deal with on a day-to-day basis at Lookout is a woman." They have



their shit together; it's a pretty awesome company. ¶ As for majors, it's not something I have any desire to do. I've been approached-from the time I was 19, majors started coming, and obviously with the whole press onslaught with The Glass Intact [Sarge's second album], I got a lot of people contacting me from major labels and I felt really bad but I kept saying "I don't want to waste your time 'cause I'm not gonna do it." Interestingly enough, the A&R reps I've actually stayed in touch with have become friends and they still think I'm an idiot because I won't do anything like that. But they're good people-it wasn't as slimy as I imagined it would be. I just don't see why I would pursue that. I don't have any desire to be a rock star, I don't really care. I don't want to work with people who have fucked over so many people and bands in the past. If you're lucky, they treat you well, but that's not the case for the vast majority of bands. Why would you want to align yourself with that? ¶ And in a shrewd sense—in the business sense as opposed to the ethical sense-96 percent of bands on major labels never sell a thousand CDs, they get dropped, they lose the rights to their records, they get fucked in all sorts of new and novel ways. Even if I didn't have the ethical commitment to my community, I still would think it's a stupid decision for 99 percent of bands. Unless you're that desperate to be rich or famous or whatever else that you're willing to roll the dice for any opportunity at it, why would you roll the dice on your band? That shit breaks up bands or it leaves them lagging for five years, like friends of ours who couldn't get the rights to their record, and they couldn't re-record their record.

Or they just buy the rights and then drop you and the record never comes out. As a music fan, there's albums that I would love to hear that I probably never will.

It happened to Juliana Hatfield. I played a show with her two days after Sarge broke up. She told me she couldn't get her record back and couldn't re-record it. And I asked her, "Aren't you devastated?" and she said, "I'll just write more songs," which I thought was an amazing attitude, but I'd be a mess if I were in her place. I'm such a slow songwriter, it would destroy me to lose an entire record. I thought her attitude was awesome, but that's not my life. I can't imagine why I'd ever want to risk it. I don't need money. If this music thing doesn't pan out, I can go be a lawyer.

n their five years of existence, Athens, Georgia electropop duo I Am The World Trade Center have found their music continually overshadowed by life-altering events. Even though their 2001 debut, *Out Of The Loop* (featuring an 11th track called "September"), was released before the September 11 attacks, the band's name became inextricably tied to one of the most devastating events in their country's history.

IATWTC instrumentalist Dan Geller and singer Amy Dykes realize that will never go away. It's not like people think of a tranquil Hawaiian port when they hear the words "Pearl Harbor," so it's no surprise that I Am The World Trade Center's 2002 record, *The Tight Connection*, still suffered a bit from the association.

As 2003 progressed, and time inched away from a topic everyone—especially the band—was tired of talking about, Dykes and Geller faced another challenge when their romantic relationship disintegrated. The two continued as a band, while their interpersonal issues provided inspiration for new material.

The result, 2004's *The Cover Up* (Gammon Records), is the band's darkest album to date. Although replete with bouncy beats and dance-pop melodies, the lyrics spoke of heartbreak with forceful directness—heartbreak IATWTC re-lived every night as Geller and Dykes toured.

Unexpectedly, the road reunited the pair as a couple, this time for good—a wedding is planned for next May. But just as it seemed 2004 would be a tranquil year, one where interviewers' questions would focus not on September 11 but on how the pair's short-lived breakup affected the band, Geller took Dykes to the emergency room in Fairfax, VA., during a tour stop in April.

There, doctors found tumors in Dykes' chest and diagnosed them as stage IIIb

Hodgkin's Disease (IV is the most severe), a cancer of the lymphatic system. The disease typically strikes young people, though it has a high survival rate.

Geller and Dykes immediately returned to Athens, where Dykes began a regimen of chemotherapy every two weeks. Life, for the most part, achieved a level of normalcy. Geller works as a biological engineer doing bio-fuel research and started a side project called Baryshnikov; his label, Kindercore, is currently dormant due to a lawsuit. Dykes started a new lifestyle company with a friend called Favorite Life and recently began teaching a textiles class at the University of Georgia.

A PT scan in July revealed that after completing about half of her chemotherapy treatments, the tumors in Dykes' chest had mostly disappeared and were now noncancerous. After completing her chemotherapy in October, she will be considered recovered, though she will need regular checkups for the rest of her life.

The joy of that good news was short-lived, however, when Dykes came down with pneumonia only a couple of weeks later. She spent two weeks in the hospital, one of them on a ventilator in intensive care.

Although she has declined interviews since her sickness began, Dykes joined Geller and spoke to *Punk Planet* about when—and if—I Am The World Trade Center will ever catch a break.

Interview by **Kyle Ryan**Photography by **Chris Bilheimer**

OK, so you get this great news—the cancer was gone—then you end up in ICU with pnemonia. What was finding that out like?

Dykes: I was feeling really good, and I was going out again and DJing and trying to be normal, but I think I overdid it . . . I

guess it's just to keep me in check; to remember that I am sick and I've got to take care of myself.

Does it seem to you like IAWTC's music has been constantly overshadowed by something—the attacks, your breakup, the illness—at least since shortly after the first record came out?

Geller: I guess so. The way we figure it, we're one for three. We've had one album that doesn't have some human-interest story.

Dykes: I don't know if it helps record sales very much.

When you went to the hospital while you were on tour, did you have any idea that something was seriously wrong?

Dykes: No. I was thinking it was allergies because every morning I would wake up and my face was puffy, but it would go down. Then we did seven weeks of the tour, and when we were in Boston and New York, it continued to stay puffy. I had some muscle pains too, but I thought maybe I had pulled a muscle, and I was out of breath a lot when I was carrying stuff. You just think like "I'm tired," "I'm hung over," you know? I figured "I'm on tour; of course I don't feel 100 percent." My face was really puffy, and that day I went in, my lips were really blue. ¶ They did a CT scan. I never thought about cancer, and the woman asked, "Do you have cancer in your family?" And I was like "No . . . " and she was like, [perky voice] "OK!" and she puts the dye in me and puts me in for the CT scan, and I'm just laying there going, "Oh my god! What did she just say to me?" And then she comes in, shuts the door, and starts crying. And we're just like, "What?" Then she's like, "I think it's lymphoma." And we're just like, "Wait-





I AM THE WORLD TRADE CENTER



what's that?" Like you know what it is, but then you're like, "Can you just say it to me? I don't understand."

I was looking around and I found that the general survival rate, even at stage IV, is like 80 percent.

Geller: Yeah, it's still very high, so they were very optimistic from the beginning. And she's looking great. Being this close to her, the only thing that I notice is that she's a little more tired and she sleeps a lot more. Other than that, everything's pretty much the same.

Dykes: Everyone said if I was gonna get cancer, I picked the right one, which is a weird thing to say. [laughs] I had so many people write me letters saying "My friend had Hodgkin's," "I had Hodgkin's, and now I'm fine," so it's comforting to know that there's some light at the end of the tunnel. I've been really, really positive about it—it's not going to help make me feel any better. I was fine until I got sick at the hospital because that made me remember.

It sounds like you're not too focused on that 20 percent that doesn't make it.

Dykes: I try not to be. [laughs warily] I have my moments when I'm petting the dog or talking to you about it—"I could be that 20 percent."

Do you have insurance? I know you had a couple of fund-raiser shows.

Geller: We have *slight* insurance, as we like to call it. [*laughs*] We do have some insurance, but it's not really paying the bills.

So how are you paying the bills?

Geller: We're basically just eeking by and

paying as much as we can to the hospital. We're going to be paying for this the rest of our lives. Even after insurance pays, you get the bill, and you laugh. You're like, "Yeah right, like that's ever gonna happen!" [laughs] After it gets to a certain level, you're just like, "Oh well, I can't really worry about that right now."

Dykes: It's kind of like Monopoly money. It really freaks me out. I can't really think about the fact that it's money. I have to take hold of myself because I can get really upset about it.

What changes have you made lifestyle-wise?

Dykes: I don't know . . . just try to do things that make you happy instead of focusing on trivial things—like just making sure that I do something fun that day, or I don't like spend the day like worrying about bills or running errands or something. Like go to a movie or go have dinner with a friend. Make sure the people you care about know you care about them. ¶ Also, my oncologist isn't really into this, but I'm going to a cancer nutritionist—take tons of supplements. It's totally ridiculous; I probably take like 40 pills a day.

So what are you guys up to now?

Geller: We DJ once or twice a week and that's about it. It's been pretty low-key. We're usually on the road nine months out of the year, so it's been kind of a weird adjustment period for us to get used to not being on the road, but we'll be back.

Dykes: I'm getting so antsy wanting to sing. A friend had a birthday party at this Chinese restaurant with karaoke and I was totally hogging the mic! I did like seven songs or something. [laughs]

With the time you're taking off to get better,

WE'RE REALLY GOOD AT NOT HIDING OR BURYING THINGS AND INSTEAD JUST DEALING WITH THEM: "WE'RE JUST GONNA HAVE TO DO THIS AND NOT LET THIS AFFECT ME."

you're not able to tour for the record. What are you doing instead to promote it?

Geller: I'm going out in September and doing a DJ tour, starting out in Atlanta and branching out into some other places. We just finished a video that will be out there for "No Expectations." It's tough because the album did just come out, and I'm just totally wanting to get on the road, but that's obviously not a possibility. The plan with the label has been always to push this over a long time, so hopefully by the time Amy gets better, we can continue in the place we started before the problems.

Dykes: I'm really missing it, but I don't want to play until I can give IOO percent to the performance. The last time we played was in May; we had just gotten back from the tour, but I still really wanted to play a show, so we did, but everyone was concerned about it and just staring at me. I wanted to be *normal*. I don't want people to watch me and be like, "She has cancer."

Having lost my mom to Inflammatory Breast Cancer, I've definitely picked up on that feeling. People want to be really helpful, but all that concern can be too much.

Dykes: Right. It's weird. I'll go places and people will stare at me. It's almost like, "That's Amy—she has cancer!" It's like, Stop staring at me. I'm fine.

It seems like you guys have been busy during this hiatus.

Geller: I'm someone who's always completely busy. I'll probably write a song every two or three days, at least the music. I had a huge catalog built up before Amy and I left for tour. We kind of pared them down to 35 tracks for the album—there were still another 20 or 30 that weren't good

enough to make final cut. There's still another two or three World Trade records sitting there ready to go.

The Cover Up was written while you were breaking up—what was it like writing, recording and playing those songs, knowing what they were about, with the person you broke up with? That sounds so hellish.

Dykes: We're really good at not hiding or burying things and instead just dealing with them: "We're just gonna have to do this and not let this affect me."

Geller: I think the most significant point in the evolution of the record was when I realized that it was becoming a breakup record, and I really had no voice on it. My parts were added sort of in response to what Amy had written, but my vocals are a lot more prominent on this record than in the past because I was responding to her initial statements.

How did she react?

Geller: I think she thought it was funnier than anything else because I've always been really shy about singing—I always hid behind the vocoder. On that CD, I'm actually singing with my real voice.

How on earth did you tour together? It's not like you have other band members there to help defuse the tension—it's just you and her in a car.

Geller: We faked it. We were in the car together all day, you get comfortable, and you feel like you're together again. You kind of ignore the fact you have these problems. We'd fight, but it was pretty good for the most part. I think being on tour is what brought us back together, ultimately. We were just by each other all the time, and

when we got home and we weren't with each other, we'd miss each other. I think that helps a lot. Also, writing the record was really kind of cathartic. It all kind of worked itself out about two weeks before we found out that Amy was sick.

They say frustration and dire situations breed creativity—like breaking up did with *The Cover Up*. What do you think is in store for the next record?

Geller: It's going to be interesting for the next record. Like I said, now I'm singing and writings songs too, so I think there's going to be more crossover in that direction. And we're both going through very different processes. She hasn't started writing yet again. She's been keeping a journal, but she hasn't started putting the words together yet.

All the reviews of this record talk about how dark it is. Do you think the next one's going to be darker or more optimistic?

Dykes: Maybe a little bit of both. I'm trying to be positive, but I can be pretty dark now. It just comes out.

Your previous records were on Kindercore, but I read that a lawsuit had shut down the label. You're never running low on drama, are you?

Geller: Someday, man, this is gonna be a good story. With the whole Kindercore saga, Amy's and my breakup, the cancer, this isn't even going to be a movie—this is like a whole miniseries. This is going to be quality entertainment. The way our lives unfold, you couldn't write better drama than our actual lives—and this past year, it's been amped up about 100 times. The story's going to have a really intense ending.

©





t this point in his career, there isn't much J Robbins hasn't done in the music world. The former frontman of Jawbox and Burning Airlines (and bass player for Government Issue) has spent nearly all of the past 20 years writing, recording and touring. The balance among those activities has shifted over the years—recording more, touring less—but the common denominator has always been a devotion to music.

When Burning Airlines broke up in 2002, it seemed likely that Robbins would re-emerge—even though his marriage in 2001 caused his first-ever case of homesickness on the road and his work as a recording engineer/producer had become more demanding. Some people simply have to play music. It's the other stuff—career-driven, relentless touring, and self-promotion—that Robbins doesn't care for.

At age 37, Robbins has been around long enough to do things his way now, and he couldn't be happier. His newest project, Channels, has a familiar sound with at least one other familiar face: drummer Darren Zentek, formerly of post-punkers Kerosene 454. The final member in the trio is none other than Robbins' wife,

Janet Morgan. Morgan, who also sings in Channels, played in the UK band Shonben, but is a relative rookie compared to her road-warrior bandmates.

Make that *former* road-warriors. Not only did Kerosene 454 tour incessantly, the band lived together and practiced nearly every day for hours. That total immersion in band life, not surprisingly, burned Zentek out, a feeling that lingers six years after the band's break-up. Since then, Zentek played with K454 guitarist Erik Denno in another short-lived band, Oswego. After that band broke up in early 2001, Zentek kept a low profile with occasional studio work and his job at Chuck Levin's Washington Music Center in Wheaton, Maryland.

Even though Zentek and Robbins could have "been there, done that" tattooed on their arms, Morgan is a newbie who never toured the UK, much less the US. Her inexperience rekindles an excitement in her bandmates that has been dulled by countless hours spent in vans.

Still, the trio agreed from the start that Channels won't become the life-consuming project that bands can be for younger folks. Zentek works, Robbins has a demanding production schedule, and Morgan works for Threespot Media, a web-design company founded by Jawbox alum Bill Barbot. There are mortgages to pay and pets to care for, so the band is decidedly *not* their life.

That mature approach is what made DeSoto Records a perfect home for Channels. The label, which released the band's debut EP, *Open*, in September, is a part-time project of Kim Coletta. The former Jawbox bassist has a career and a child, so she maintains a moderate release schedule. DeSoto is one label that won't hassle Channels to tour constantly.

But they will be on the road this fall for their inaugural tour. It's the first of what they hope will be many short tours—the kind where you're out long enough to have fun and back before you miss too much work. It's a completely practical, low-stress approach to being in a band, and it only took Robbins two decades to figure it out.

Interview by **Kyle Ryan**Photography by Pete Duvall



If we could take a step back first, because I don't think I ever saw this addressed anywhere: What happened with Burning Airlines?

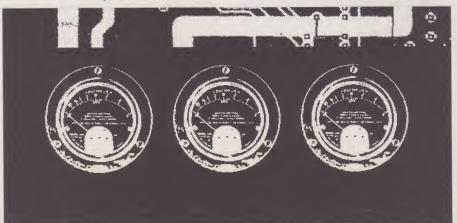
Robbins: Well, Burning Airlines kind of just sort of ground to a halt, I think. We didn't break up so much as we decided that we needed to take a break and then we never came back from the break. We were touring a lot more than was fun, but not enough according to the common, prevailing wisdom about how to get your band out and

promote it to people. I think there was also some disagreement in the band about just how much we should be doing. Some people have the paradigm that they're pursuing a career in music, and for me I don't really look at it that way—I never have. The whole idea that you have to go hustle and get your name out in front of people and shove yourself in their face over and over again is really anathema to me. It wasn't a business proposition when Jawbox did that; it was

like, "Holy shit, let's get out there. We've got to do as much as we can." I've done a lot of the stuff that people are sort of striving to do in bands and not all of it is particularly rewarding to me. What I want to do is make music and be creative and create something that I think is special. I have faith that that will connect with somebody, but in terms of that whole game of trying to be a rockstar, it's just sort of a ridiculous pursuit. I mean, it's great for somebody, and I'm sure as a recording engineer or producer, I know people who are ambitious in that regard. I have respect for their ambitions because it suits the kind of person they are, but it just doesn't work for me.

But it is how you make your life; once Burning Airlines stopped, it didn't seem like anyone expected never to hear from you again.

Robbins: It's cool because I really want to make music with these people—and that's just it. On the one hand, there's this woman in my life who is amazing and inspiring to me and we have this whole life together. Music is a part of that life, and so making music together



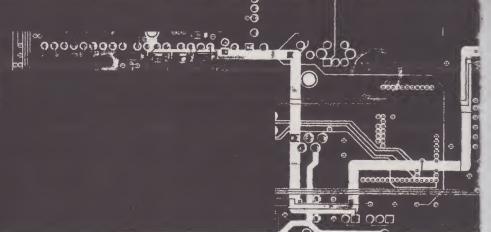
comes out of that. On the other hand, there's this amazing guy who I admire so much, who I've seen play for years, and I've been involved in music he's made because I've recorded his bands. ¶ There was another thing I've been thinking about a lot, which is when we moved up to Baltimore, I went out to a show and I saw Asa Osborne from Lungfish. Lungfish hadn't played out in something like two years. He and Daniel Higgs had just done that Pupils record. I was telling him, "I heard that

Robbins: Janet and I talked about playing music together forever—since we'd started going out. It's weird, we were both really shy about doing it, but eventually we just sort of persisted. When we sat down and started playing, it was really, really cool. I've always known that Janet could play bass and I loved her singing voice, and I knew we had really similar tastes. ¶ Darren is completely a hero of mine. No joke, he just completely blows me away. Just from the

and I'm like, "Oh my God, I'm playing aside this man, and he's done what he's done, and he's *incredible*." And Darren's the same. They're both such genius musicians, I just feel pretty honored to be playing with them. Playing with J is awesome. We have a lot of fun. Plus, it means that if ever he goes away to do a gig, I get to go with him.

J and Darren have been doing this so long in such an intense way, and it makes me wonder what

This is what I do; this is necessary for me. I do it because it makes me feel alive. I'm going to be doing this when I'm 65, even if I'm just making weird four-tracks in my basement and nobody hears them.



record-I think it's great. What's going on with Lungfish? Are you guys playing at all?" And he was like, "Yeah, absolutely." And I was like, "Really? Where? When?" And he said, "Well, about twice a week in the basement." I was talking to Daniel and he said it was the best year of their band, this year they had spent just getting together and playing, just playing for its own sake, like this is the time they're going to be in a room together and make music. He said it was the greatest, most productive year. They were super-psyched about it. That's really inspirational to me. It's not advocating a retreat to the basement; it's just advocating a return to first principles, where the really great thing is the communication that happens within music, and that's been a real thrill of this band so far.

The last time you and I did a real interview was toward the end of 2001. During it, you said that since you'd been married, you felt homesick on the road for the first time. When I heard Janet was in Channels, I was like, "He figured out how to make it work!" Tell me how Channels came together.

first time we got together to play with Darren, he's so fun to play with. It just completely clicked. ¶ Out of any band I've ever been in, this band came together the most out of a dedication to first principles. That's always been really important to me. The number one thing is you do this because it's just something you have inside of you and it's got to come out. It's not out of like, "I've got to start a band so I can go on tour and get chicks."

Janet, were you skeptical at all about being in a band with your husband?

Morgan: As far as me and J and our relationship and doing something like that together, no. To me, J is my husband; he's this awesome guy, but since I've moved to this country, I've been slow at realizing that he's something else to other people. I guess maybe I've been thinking about that side of things a little bit more.

How do you mean?

Morgan: People want to talk to him and people think he's amazing—and he is, he's awesome. We're about to release this record practice is like. Considering your relative inexperience—at least compared to them—do you feel like you have to catch up with them at all?

Morgan: Practice is great. I am slower than the boys, yes, especially when it comes to "jamming" something new for the first time. It's more about confidence with me, though-feeling confident enough to just go with what I feel, with what comes out. That has nothing to do with Darren and J, though; it's just something that's always lingered in my thoughts. Darren and J are so encouraging always and so patient with me, which is super cool. The only time we're really at odds as a band is when they start playing old, American punk-rock classics-something I may have heard and is probably in our record collection at home, but they're not songs I grew up playing along too, so I'm kind of like a fish out of water. When that happens, I turn into the school mistress and tell them to stop being rock boys and get back to work.

Darren, you haven't really done much since Oswego broke up in 2001. Why?

Zentek: I don't know. It's difficult to start playing with just anybody; It has to *click*. When I started playing music, I was playing with friends. I didn't have a grand plan. I didn't say to myself, I *need* to get in a band and I *need* to tour. I didn't have any expectations, so after Oswego, it wasn't as if I didn't want to play; it just didn't come up.

J, it seems like your engineering/production schedule is becoming more and more demand-

and be direct. That was a really inspiring project. It's not necessarily a direct musical inspiration—I don't think anything in this band sounds remotely like the Promise Ring—but that project of paring down and being direct, that's directly inspired by the Promise Ring. There's no doubt about it.

On the other side of that, it seems like spending so much time with music would burn you out with writing it. Does that ever happen?

more than I have been, because we want to be able to work on new songs so we can go out and play shows. I'm hoping that we'll do a good bit more. I'm trying to schedule rehearsal time like we do when we're working on a recording project. We designate a block of time to come up with songs, and we make the time to play together.

Despite having to schedule time like that, it seems like you guys have a more laid-back



ing. Was that an issue in your other bands?

Robbins: It was a point of contention in Burning Airlines, but at the end of the day, this is not a job. Doing music is not a career choice for me, that's just not how I look at it. This is what I do; this is necessary for me. I do it because it makes me feel alive. I'm going to be doing this when I'm 65, even if I'm just making weird four-tracks in my basement and nobody hears them. That's why I love playing in this band so much. When we started playing together, I felt like I was starting over with a clean slate. Everything seems completely fresh to me.

It seems like it'd be hard for anything to be fresh when you spend most of your time recording other bands. Does the exposure to so much music for intense stretches of time affect your songwriting at all?

Robbins: I definitely know that when Burning Airlines was together, it was just after I worked with the Promise Ring a lot. I had seen them try to refine their songwriting to these really direct terms. That was like a real project for them, to simplify Robbins: Not really. Lyric writing is the hardest part for me. People are always telling me that my writing style is obtuse and that the lyrics are hard to follow, so I guess that must be true, but I know it's just really, really, really important to me that at least what I end up singing is going to be something that makes sense to me. I really, really want to express a point of view and try to communicate something, even if it's in my weird, convoluted language. I need to at least know that all those things add up, and it's very hard for me to write lyrics. I hate that idea that I'm just bluffing or writing to fill a line. It takes an eternity.

Do you and Janet spend a lot of time at home working on music? I'm just wondering if it feels like you could always be practicing, like people who have a home office could always be working.

Robbins: We have to set aside time for it. If I'm working, there's huge blocks of time where all I'm really doing is working. I'll come home after midnight and just crash out. If I have weekends, then maybe we'll set aside time on weekends. What's coming up now is trying to schedule time for the band

approach, even when it comes to your label. Kim's not releasing a lot of records every year or hounding you guys to tour.

Robbins: That was a big part of the attraction of DeSoto to us. Kim is one of my oldest friends in the world—if anybody's going to understand and be supportive of what this band wants to do and how we want to do it, it's going to be her.

Even though you guys have plans to tour, it doesn't seem like it's going to be anything like you used to do with your old bands.

Zentek: I don't think that's going to be a main thing for us. I think we're going to do a lot of shows here and there. There are things that I love about touring, but there are also things I hate about it. You can waste a lot of time on the road, and you have to make a lot of sacrifices. You know with this band, we're a little older and we have more responsibilities, so it's pretty hard to get up and go away from my job and leave work for extended amounts of time.

Robbins: These are the kinds of things we are inspired to do: things that are fun,

things that feel eye-opening and are kind of like an adventure, as opposed to "Man, we've got to hit the road." More power to bands that do that, but I've certainly had that experience in my life already to the *nth* degree and so has Darren.

But not Janet.

Robbins: This is a totally new experience for her. I think it's going to make it new for me and Darren, too. She's got a whole set many times I might as well be on tour. If I'm working out of town, I'm gone for IO days or two weeks or even a month sometimes. Or I'm home, but I'm working I2-hour days.

Morgan: So, now that we're in a band together, going on tour will be awesome. We'll get to be together.

Do you think Darren's going to feel like a third wheel?

hoping that this will help me with my stage fright. I look forward to playing being more *normal* to me, being a way of life rather than a rarity.

J, do you still get nervous before playing?

Robbins: Not terribly. I do a little bit because I've started playing with a lot more pedals, which requires a certain amount of physical coordination that I simply don't possess. I'm never content to



of things to experience because she hasn't been on a tour before. One of my favorite things about touring always was that you got to see the country and see the world. I used to have this epiphany every time we were driving out of Arizona and we reached California. You go through this crazy, rocky, mountainous desert, then you sort of break through, and you're into California. Then, before you know it, you're in San Diego, and you feel the sea air, and you're like, "Holy shit, I'm all the way across the country. I just made it all the way across America and now I'm in this completely different, new place, and it's all because I'm playing music." That was such an incredible kick to me, so I'm really psyched for Janet to have that kind of experience. I think it's going to revitalize the whole thing.

You're married, though. Do you think you'll get on each other's nerves when you're constantly around each other?

Morgan: No. Our whole relationship we've had so much time apart. We're always complaining that we never get to see each other.

Robbins: Seriously, right now there are so

Robbins: Not really. I'd like to think that it's a benefit of getting older. Maybe if I were still in my early 20s, I would have had a thought for that because I was so easily distracted by a lot of imaginary conflict. But now it's just like no, we fucking love Darren. Like I said, it's a benefit, I think, of getting older, at least for me personally. I have less time to get caught up in nonsense.

Darren and J are these road-warrior types who've been everywhere and done everything when it comes to touring. But Janet, you're a rookie out there. What are you looking forward to when it comes to touring?

Morgan: I am indeed a rookie—even my band in London never went on tour. We played one-off shows here and there—the UK is so small, you drive everywhere in a few hours and are back in your own bed the same night—but we never even did two in a row, so this is going to be a totally new experience for me. There is so much I'm looking forward to: visiting places in the US I have not yet been to; revisiting places I have been to and love; seeing friends I've not seen for a while. I am looking forward to playing several shows in a row. I am also

playing real simple, strummy guitar parts. I've got to fill in a lot of, like, voices. It's not like I get nervous; it's almost like I get flustered because I have to be on top of so much. That's a fleeting thing. Usually right before we play, if I'm trying to get all my pedals and shit together and making sure that everything still works, the only thing I'm nervous about is if something technical goes wrong, or if I'm just stumbling over my own feet, which is definitely a very real danger. ¶ When Jawbox was together, I had a lot of anxiety about being on stage in front of people, and sometime during Burning Airlines I decided that having that much anxiety was no fun, and that it would be a lot of better if I had fun. If you're not enjoying being on stage, if there isn't something fundamentally enjoyable about it to you, then maybe you shouldn't be doing it. I really, really love singing more and more, and it's particularly cool to sing with Janet. I just can't describe how much I love being on stage with Janet and Darren. Sometimes when I'm up there, I can't believe that it's actually happening; it's just so amazing to me. @



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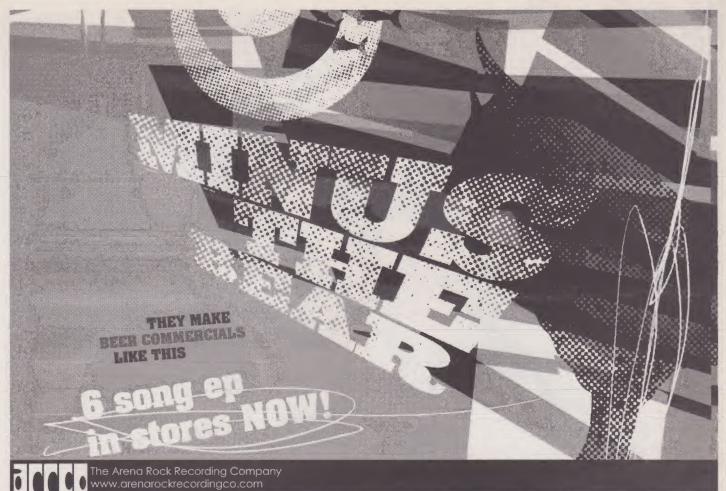
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photographs from the Republican National Convention protests

By Elise Gardella

From quarter of a million—strong demonstrations, to small group "actions," the protests that took place during the 2004 Republican National Convention will go down as one of the biggest, most elaborately planned, and successful weeks of public dissent in the last few decades. Of course, because there wasn't teargas filling the streets, after Sunday's huge event you barely heard about it. Here is a silent, but powerful, look at five days like no other on the streets of New York City.

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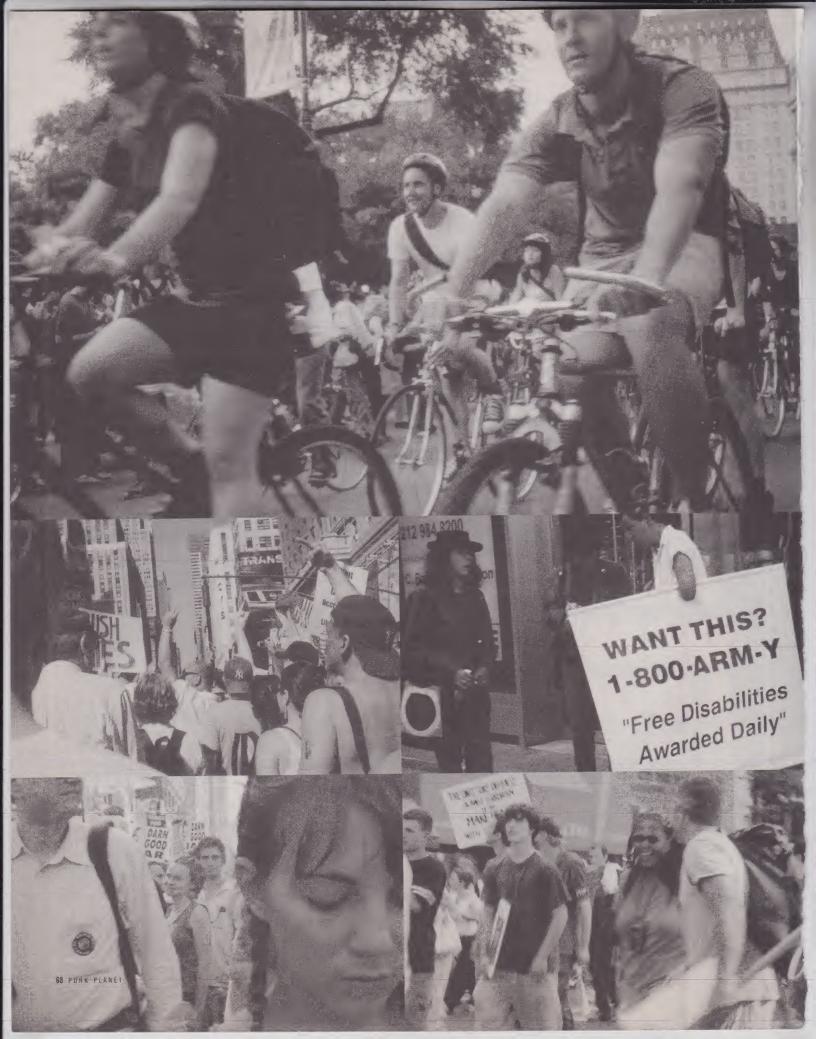
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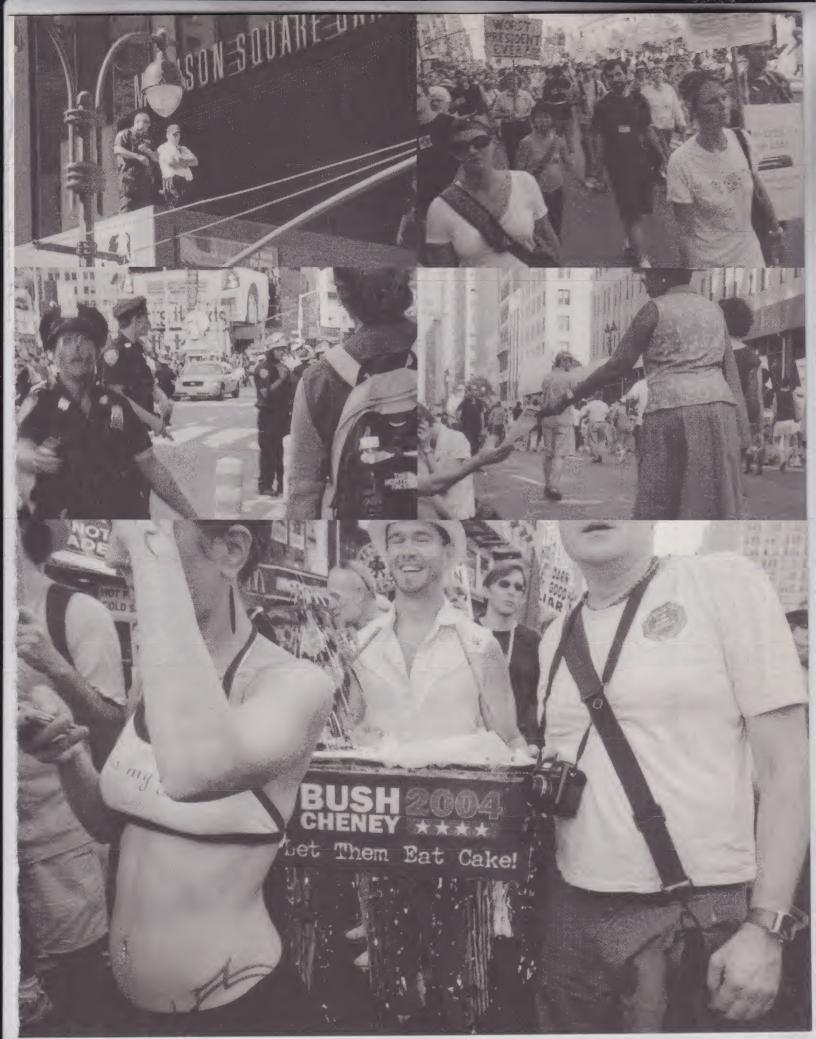
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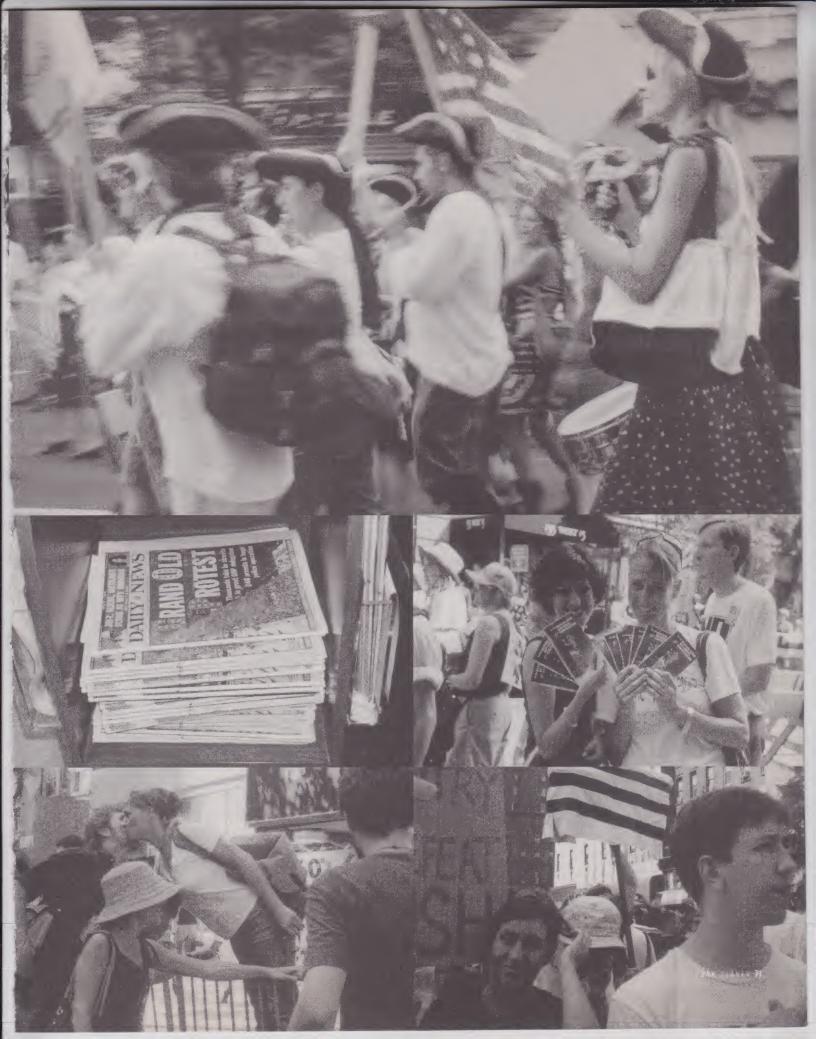
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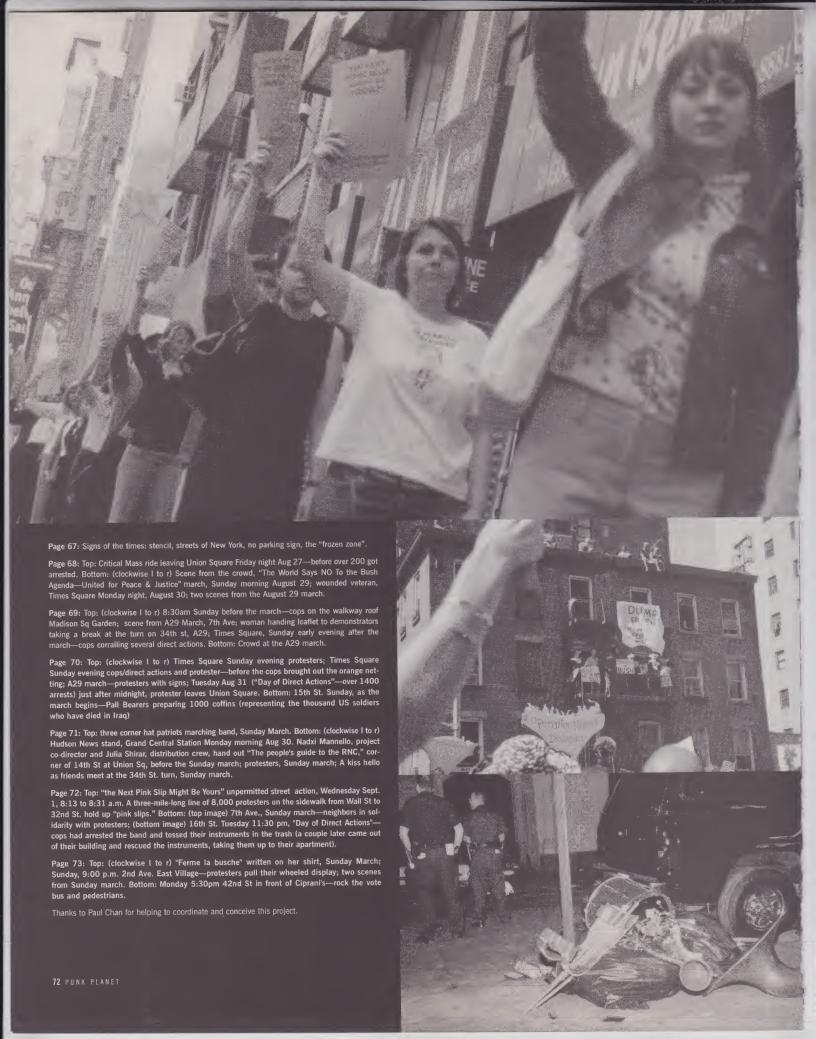
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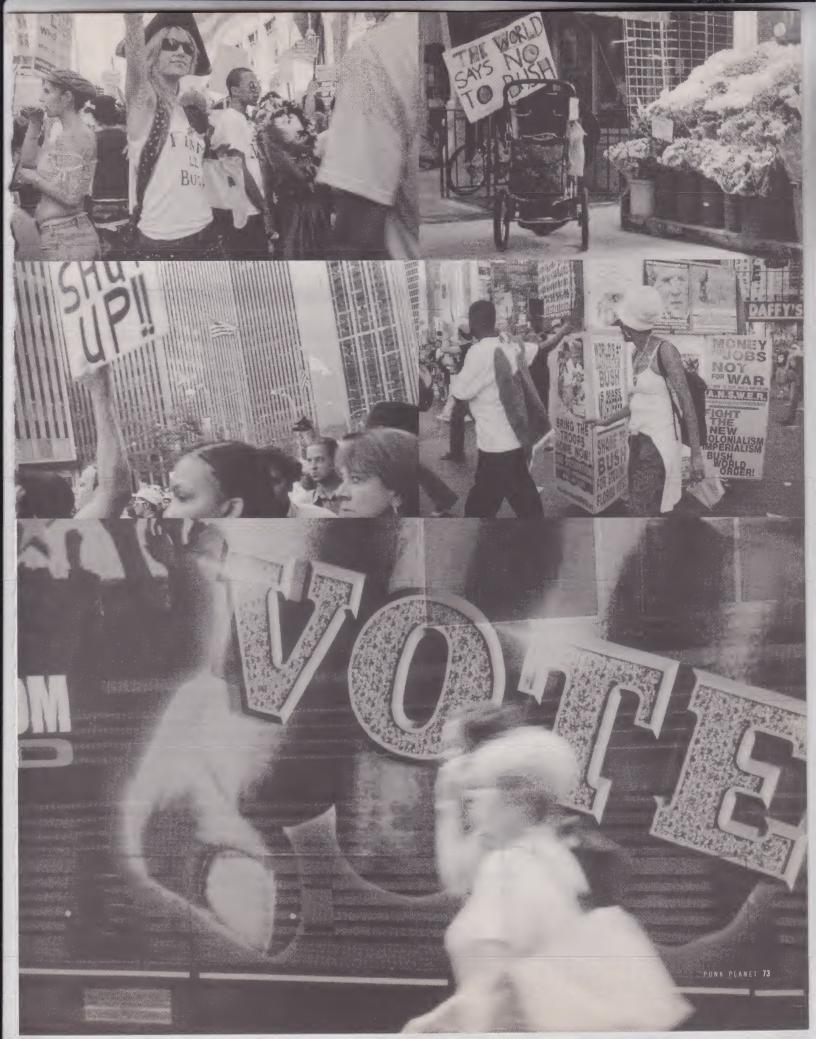
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A THINK

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s I enter the building the first thing that hits me is the sheer, raw woman power. The office is a noisy, bustling, activity filled place. A few men are there, mostly behind desks, but the women are unmistakably and completely in control. There are 60,000 women sex workers who are part of the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC). The name sums it updurbar meaning "indomitable," "unstoppable." Whoever thought that up was brilliant.

Listening to the women's stories I am filled with admiration for their guts, their spirit, and the manner in which they carry on with their lives, cheerfully and matter-of-factly. There is no self-pity, no whining. Theirs is a precarious, fragile existence often filled with violence and uncertainty. I see women with scars, knife slashes and burn marks. Yet they take everything in their stride. I am intrigued by their pride, their in-your-face attitude, especially in the context of India, a hypocritical society not known for its political correctness, much less its tolerance or sympathy.

"How did Durbar start?" I ask.

Dr. Smarajit Jana, who started it all, explains: "Everyone wanted a successful HIV/AIDS project. I was sent to do this but soon realized the basic scientific premise was flawed. The entire global scientific community working on HIV/AIDS assumed that the battle could be won using information—awareness—and technology—condoms. I realized pretty fast that the women were not in control of their lives. Their clients, pimps, partners, and madams controlled them. They were frequently harassed, arrested, and often beaten and raped by the police. The economic exploitation by money lenders was beyond belief. We realized soon enough that only by empowering them collectively, by addressing their economic, political, and social exclusion, could we succeed.

"Of course, this was simpler in theory than in practice," she continues. "With thousands of sex workers, it's a buyers' market. The macho males paying money didn't want condoms. So even if 10 sex workers refuse sex without condoms, they find an 11th desperate and willing. That's it. The system collapses. Every single sex worker had to stand firm, stick by the collective decision. There was no way it would work without the power equation changing."

Dr. Jana's team began by trying to understand the everyday problems of the community and to seek answers from them. "We changed our thinking completely—began addressing the women's concerns, not just health. The biggest problem was indebtedness. If we were fighting for the rights of these women based on their needs and perceptions, we had to end their economic exploitation."

This was the genesis of the USHA Multipurpose Co-operative Society. Moneylenders had the women in a vicious stranglehold. A woman who became ill would have to take a loan of 500 rupees [\$II] to tide her over. She'd be frantic to get back to work because she'd have to pay 500 rupees interest a month and be ensnared in the moneylender's trap forever. The interest would pile up relentlessly—between 600 and I,200 percent paid to dozens of loan schemes, each one more complex and diabolical than the other.

"Why a co-op?" I ask.

"The women decided," answers Jana. "Banks demanded documents, voters' identity cards, proof of residence, recommendations—none of which the women could supply. Bankers treated them with contempt too. The old social exclusion bit. We wanted a structure in which the women could participate totally and actively. The co-op won."

USHA started small, with 13 peer educators who pooled the day's earnings of a group of sex workers. Then Mrinal Dutta, the current director, had a thought: "Sex workers earn a lot, but never save. Why not collect their savings every morning before the money disappears?" Mrinal's mother was a sex worker and he understood the problems intimately.

Now every morning the collectors now go from house to house collecting the previous night's earnings. Accounts are meticulously maintained and the women's knowledge of figures and finance has changed dramatically. Many have become literate, too.

This brilliant idea was the forerunner of a variety of other savings schemes, and USHA's growth has been remarkable. By the start of 2004, its working capital had reached 25 million rupees (\$550,000), its annual turnover, 52 million rupees (\$1.2 million). Such corporate-style figures have made it the most talked-

WORKERS OF THE NIGHT, UNITE

With the odds stacked against them, a team of activists and prostitutes in West Bengal, India have created their own DIY society.

By Mari Marcel Thekaekara Illustration By Andrew Zibihlyj



"Before, if someone was dying we could not get money except at exorbitant rates of interest," she replies. "Now I've built a house for my family. Paid for my daughter's wedding. I have money in the bank, but USHA is about more than just money. I am called in to settle local disputes. My word counts. I'm someone here, not just a nobody like before."

about co-op in West Bengal. The banking co-op has 6,000 registered members—only sex workers and their female children can belong—and is run by an elected board of 12 members. The number of members could easily double, but for reasons best known to itself, the government has granted USHA permission to function in just six districts.

It wasn't always like this. When Dr. Jana first sought permission to register USHA, the government refused. Prostitution is illegal in India under the Prevention of Immoral Trafficking Act. The sex workers were advised to register as a coop of housewives, but the bureaucrats had not bargained for a face-off with feisty sex workers. When told that they had to register as housewives, one firebrand retorted: "The only way I can become a housewife is if you agree to marry me. Are you up to it?" The embarrassed civil servant literally ran out of the room. After six months of close encounters of a similar nature, the administration threw up its hands and gave permission. This was a huge victory for the organization.

The DMSC is possibly the only organization of sex workers in India which states clearly and unambiguously that its purpose is not to "rehabilitate" sex workers—that it exists to fight for their rights. It is explicit about its political objective of fighting for recognition of their work as work and of themselves as workers, and for a secure social existence for themselves and their children. Durbar also seeks to reform laws that criminalize them and impinge on their human rights. Similarly, USHA is clear that it exists not for "economic rehabilitation" but to provide financial support in a crisis and to prevent economic exploitation. Its major victory has been to liberate the women from the pimp-moneylender-trafficker nexus.

Such phenomenal growth made professional management a necessity. With its technical expertise and infrastructure, USHA now serves as the major financial institution for the entire range of sex workers' organizations affiliated to Durbar. Each of these was started to combat one particular problem.

The Sramjeebee Mahila Sangha aims to stop the violence of local hoodlums and thugs. The Binodini Shramik Union hopes to join the larger international labour movement to fight for the rights and recognition of sex workers as workers. Komol Gandhar promotes music, dance and theatre troupes. The Saathi Sangathan, or Companions Collective, was formed to get the <code>babus</code>—non-paying partners of the sex workers, who live with them, often father-

ing children—to support the fight against the violence and coercion routinely meted out to sex workers and their children. Berabhenge—"Tearing Fences"—is designed for kids who are haunted by the fact that they do not know who their father is. Often they become the butt of cruel jokes in school when their personal histories leak out. The stigma causes many to drop out of school. Rahul Niketan and Indubala Abasik Vidyala are residential homes where kids live and go to nearby schools.

Durbar has also created 27 "Self Regulatory Boards" to prevent trafficking of women and minors, stop coercion and ensure that those who enter the trade do so with consent and in full knowledge of what the job entails.

The medical intervention, which was the basis for everything that came after, has been hugely successful. This was what created trust between the women and the medical team and was the entry point into the area. It began with small clinics in the heart of the district so that women could use them easily and freely. A great deal of work is done for those with HIV/AIDS. Hotline and counselling centres have been set up and an army of health workers criss-crosses the territory, trying to be available when needed.

Durbar and USHA are unique because they are owned and managed completely by the community—not by an NGO, not by men in suits, not by middle-class professionals or consultants. It is clearly their organization.

"What impact has it made on you personally?" I ask Kajol Bose, the President of USHA.

"Before, if someone was dying we could not get money except at exorbitant rates of interest," she replies. "Now I've built a house for my family. Paid for my daughter's wedding. I have money in the bank, but USHA is about more than just money. I am called in to settle local disputes. My word counts. I'm someone here, not just a nobody like before."

Bharati De adds, "Our condition is a hundred times better than before. Before Durbar, the police would treat us like dirt. Arrest, beat, rape, abuse us, call us filthy names. Now when I go to the police station, they say, 'Have a seat.' Can you imagine—the police saying 'have a seat' to me!"

She continues: "Today our women stand in front of a mike, in front of thousands of people, and demand our rights. Yes, life has changed for us. It was a hard fight, but now we can hold our heads up high."

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13TH AVENUE MUSIC Longview
PHANTOM CITY RECORDS Olympia
FALLOUT RECORDS Seattle
LEFT BANK BOOKS Seattle
SINGLES GOING STEADY Seattle
MOTHER RECORDS Tacoma

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EAR WAX Madison
ATOMIC RECORDS Milwaukee
BEANS & BARLEY Milwaukee

Wyoming

SONIC RAINBOW Casper

Canada

SLOTH RECORDS Calgary
FREECLOUD RECORDS Edmonton
THE BOOKSHELF Guelph
THE JUNGLE Kingston
SPEED CITY RECORDS London
LIBRARIE ALTERNATIVE Montreal
SOUND CENTRAL Montreal
MUDSHARK MEDIA North Bay
SONGBIRD MUSIC Ottawa
VINYL DINER Saskatoon
ST. JAMES STEREO Thunder Bay
ROTATE THIS Toronto
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MONORAIL MUSIC Glasgow

he moment he opens his mouth, you can tell Mike Rogers has a fire burning in his belly that makes the Centralia Mine Fire look like candles on birthday cake. "I have this anger that my government is turning against me as a citizen," his voice rises slowly and curls around each word. "I used to direct my anger towards the TV. I found myself sitting there yelling at the Fox News Channel." He decided to take charge of the situation by putting down the remote and picking up the keyboard. With that, his controversial website BlogActive.com was born.

"Our enemies," says the Washington DC-based activist, "use lies to further their version of the truth. We serve up the truth in a quest for justice." What's on the menu? He and a network of volunteers are using BlogActive to out gay congressional staffers whose employers are known for their opposition to gay rights. Needless to say, Rogers website has hit Washington DC like a megaton bomb.

This type of effort isn't new to Rogers. He was a founding member of Queer Nation, the short-lived—but undeniably influential—radical Queer activist group and coined the legendary slogan, "We're here. We're queer. Get used to it!" Some of the group's most notorious actions were their efforts to out closeted gay and lesbian celebrities and public figures. The Queer Nation hit list included some of the biggest names in public life, from Jodie Foster to the most notorious, paradoxical anti-gay closet case in American history: Roy Cohn. Cohn served as chief counsel to Senator Joseph McCarthy's Communist (and homosexual) hunting US Senate permanent investigations subcommittee between 1953 and '54. Although he lived an extravagant gay lifestyle, he vehemently denied his homosexuality until his death from AIDS-related complications in 1986.

For Rogers, Cohn embodies everything he's fighting against. The minute he started to take a look around at the people who live in his city—and run the country—it didn't take long for him to realize the ugly truth: the nation's capital is *crawling* with Roy Cohns. To (dis)honor Cohn's memory, Rogers created the "Roy Cohn Award for outstanding achievement *against* gay and lesbian Americans" on BlogActive. In the few short months that the website has been up and running, dishonored recipients have included Jay Timmons, Executive Director of The National Republican Senatorial Committee and Dirk Smith, the controller for Trent Lott's New Republican Majority Fund, a political action committee that can receive unlimited contributions from individuals and special interests.

Roger's biggest outing to date was just days before the Republican National Convention when he announced on his website that Congressman Ed Schrock of Virginia, a co-sponsor of the Federal Marriage Amendment, had been making calls to gay phone sex lines. It's a heavy accusation to make against this long-time Republican, but Rogers claims to have heard tapes of the calls. He chuckles—"Where there's smoke, there's fire... it's always the ones who scream the loudest about family values that have the most to hide in their personal life."

Rogers never expected to generate this kind of attention. "I was just trying to warn the gay community in Washington about some of the hypocrites among us. I thought it was just a few staffers here and there, but then it took off," he says. He's received nearly 20,000 e-mails in response to Blogactive.com. He says that the Internet has been an amazing tool for him. "Blogactive reaches more people than Queer Nation or ACT UP in their heyday."

The far-reaching repercussions of Roger's outing campaign has rekindled the debate on the politics of outing in the gay and lesbian community. Mary Patten, a queer activist and video artist who teaches in the Film and Video Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago says, "There are people who have an absolute, visceral objection to outing based on issues of privacy. They believe it's unethical to violate a person's privacy." But, says Patten, times have changed. "The idea that you can separate the public from the private is a pretty dated assumption."

Patten believes that because many people still feel outing is an invasion of privacy, when groups out someone, they need to choose their targets carefully and make sure they have a good reason. "Outing for the sake of visibility is limited as a political strategy," she says, because ultimately someone has to choose who to target. On what basis do you choose who will be pulled out of the closet?

Consider how the recent Jim McGreevey scandal unfolded. When the New Jersey Governor stepped down amid allegations of political corruption and misappropriation of state funds, the story made front pages all over the country. No one would deny that the resignation of a gubernatorial office is big news, but when the story broke, the particulars of the corruption allegations were eclipsed by McGreevey's resignation speech in which he announced that he was a "gay American."

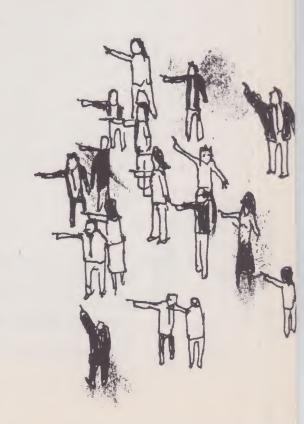
"McGreevey and his people chose those words very carefully."—What was the desired effect?

"Making the statement, 'I am a gay American' strikes me as a very calculated move," Patten explains. "It indicates that he understands that 'gay people' represent a significant demographic, and assumes that the community is unified by a specific set of goals, gay marriage being number one."



AS FUCK

WHEN THE DEBATE AGAINST GAY MARRAGE HEATED UP THIS SUMMER, ONLINE ACTIVST MIKE ROGERS FOUGHT BACK THE ONLY WAY HE COULD: BY DRAGGING GAY RIGHT-WINGERS OUT OF THE CLOSET. ILLUSTRATION BY NICK BUTCHER



Patten goes on to say that "some say a contributing factor in the events surrounding the McGreevey affair—awarding a job to his lover who was completely unqualified, and his lover turning around and being a sleazebag and threatening to sue—can partially be attributed to the 'pathology of the closet.' They feel that it's the cost that comes from having to live a double life: Presenting yourself as straight in public, and hiding the fact that you're gay in your personal life."

Rogers doesn't deny that this was a dubious move on McGreeey's part, but he sees the silver that lines this cloud: "I think it's a sign of progress: 50 years ago it was better to admit you were corrupt and hide the fact that you're gay. Now it's better to say you're gay and hide the fact that you're corrupt."

Contrary to what you might expect, Rogers says he doesn't have a problem with people choosing to live their life in the closet, "That's not the issue," he insists. "We're not handing out Roy Cohns to just anyone." Rogers picks his targets carefully, and while they may not have front-page name recognition, "don't believe that these are the people who don't have any power," says Rogers. "They are the chiefs of staff who do the hiring and the firing, they are the press secretaries who shape the public message. They have a lot of power in the capital."

For many queer activists, the actions of Rogers and the debate around gay marriage has started a discussion about broader issues.

Mattilda (the pen name of Matt Bernstein Sycamore) is a writer and queer activist in San Francisco. He rejects the way in which "mainstream gay rights activists view identity as an endpoint. This is what has lead to such a perversion of what queer issues actually are," he says. "The gay mainstream is not only complicit in this silencing, but these powerful white gays are so desperate to grasp the last privileges that they've been denied for being openly gay. They want to redefine queer identity along a heteronormative axis. Radical activists see queer identity as a starting point from which to reclaim, reframe, and reshape the world. We want to challenge and dismantle the sickening racist, classist, sexist, and ablist culture that surrounds us, not surrender in exchange for a comfortable invisibility."

Mike Rogers disagrees that only white, wealthy, same-sex couples would benefit if they had the right to marry. He says he has "heard so many rich gay people say, 'what do we need gay marriage for anyway?' Those people don't need it because they can go to a lawyer and get power of attorney, they can get their house put in joint trust, write up will, directives, and after about \$1,000 or

\$2,000 in lawyers fees you have all the documents that you need to simulate a marriage. But if you're a poor woman making \$11,000 a year and you're living with your partner and your daughter, you don't have \$1,000 or \$2,000 to spend on a lawyer. That's all a marriage is: a set of contractual agreements and obligations that people enter into when they sign a marriage contract with their home state. It's a simple process, and it's a lot cheaper than hiring a fancy lawyer."

People in the gay community in DC have been talking about same sex marriage a lot over the last year. The idea for BlogActive came to Rogers when he realized how irritated he was getting when he heard about the ambivalence that some people felt towards their work on Capital Hill. "I would go out and I'd pick up on the conversations of gay Republicans," he remembers. "They'd be sitting next to me in the theater, or at the bar, and I'd hear them saying, 'My boss is for the Federal Marriage Amendment, and I have to deal with it.' And I was like, 'You don't have to deal with it.' That's when I got involved."

Rogers giggles as he confesses that he continues to seek out gay Republicans in queer establishments. "They sort of keep to themselves, but everyone knows they hang out at the Dine. I've started putting in an appearance from time to time."

It would seem that with so much sensationalist journalism out there it would be impossible to maintain a double life in DC, but Rogers claims that the veil of silence is a longstanding tradition in Washington, and it's one that he wants to rip clean off. "Sex and power go hand in hand, and this is Washington we're talking about." He pauses for a moment, and his voice deepens, "There's a lot of power in this town. And you know what? There's also a lot of sex in this town. Here's the thing: in this town the rules of engagement—Reagan spoke of it—that says, come five o'clock you lay it down, and you say, 'Work's over, let's play.' Those rules have to change in light of the current political climate."

For Rogers, changing the rules means breaking them—even if he's not making many friends in the process. "It's not the fact that they're gay that's being even being outed, it's the fact that they work for right-wing Republicans. They say things like, 'you're messing with my job.' I've heard that 'I'm just following orders' song too many times. These people work in our government, their work affects me and the entire community, they're accountable. And as far as I'm concerned they're culpable."



ROGERS NEVER EXPECTED TO GENERATE THIS KIND OF ATTENTION. "I WAS JUST TRYING TO WARN THE GAY COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON ABOUT SOME OF THE HYPOCRITES AMONG US. I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A FEW STAFFERS HERE AND THERE, BUT THEN IT TOOK OFF," HE ABOUT SOME OF THE HYPOCRITES AMONG US. I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A FEW STAFFERS HERE AND THERE, BUT THEN IT TOOK OFF," HE SAYS. HE'S RECEIVED NEARLY 20,000 E-MAILS IN RESPONSE TO BLOGACTIVE.COM. HE SAYS THAT THE INTERNET HAS BEEN AN AMAZING TOOL FOR HIM. "BLOGACTIVE REACHES MORE PEOPLE THAN QUEER NATION OR ACT UP IN THEIR HEYDAY."

FILT UP TO UN



issues of Punk Planet

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THREE DIFFERENT PROJECTS BRING ZINEMAKING AND THE

he strongest characteristic of the punk philosophy is that it can never be taken over; you simply cannot co-opt an action that is based on rebellion, self-expression, and the ability to challenge. So it seems fitting that a crop of Chicagoarea educators are using this sensibility to teach their students about the importance of motivation and passion over learned skills and money.

Such teachers, are surfacing in art and English classes all over this Midwestern mecca. All arrive with the hopes of showing kids that there is an alternative to mainstream culture, and all are equipped with the zine as their method-of-choice to give kids a voice above the dull roar of our very un-punk world.

Spiral Workshop: "Challenging the preconceived notions of everything."

Near the South Loop and just west of the Chicago River at the University of Illinois at Chicago, art education coordinator Olivia Gude and her band of college students are teaching teens to get down with their punk rock selves. This fall, they will be educating high-schoolers with Black Flag posters as props during the UIC Spiral Workshop's I4th year of turning art class into a cultural inquisition.

"We want to broaden their horizons and make them question their surroundings," says Stacy DeVoney, one of Gude's students and Spiral teachers. Before she began Spiral, Gude was let down by the alternative school movement of the '70s. It's all inspiring, she thought, but what about the public school kids? She learned that to change an institution like public education—as flawed as it is vast—you need to infiltrate it and radicalize it from the inside.

Spiral, held for eight weeks during the fall semester, helps highschoolers expand their perception of both society and art itself. It also trains art education students on how to use one's unique identity to be a good teacher. Students choose from a number of themed classes that cover different social phenomena and their relationships to art as a craft. The program believes that passion is more important than skill, and artistry holds little definition.

This fall, three of Gude's students are offering the ultimate art-as-passion-over-skill class: Punk Process in Print. More a study of punk sensibilities than punk culture, the class will explore DIY art, zine-making, public art, and other expressions of the punk voice.

"Punk has always resisted appropriation," Gude says. "No matter if the styles or the clothes have, the sensibility has not."

The Punk Process teachers, DeVoney, Todd Osborne, and Katy Provence, want to steer the kids away from visions of safety pins and mohawks and to think more about punk as an artistic theory. "Art is not just practice and exercise until authority says you're good enough to speak," says Gude. "It's about the *right* to have a voice."



PHILOSOPHY OF PUNK TO CHICAGO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

"Art has always been about finances," says Provence. "But with so much public art, it's not so true anymore. The Punk Process is about taking art out of the museums."

Gude is already generating topic ideas for the semester. She wants to explore the concept of deconstruction and the energy that is released when we attack images and recreate them in our own context. Meanwhile, the teachers are brainstorming themes on fashion, printmaking and drawing, and graffiti art. They are musing on a class zine as the final project, a sort of collaborative portfolio that each student will be able to distribute in the true DIY way.

The Spiral teachers hope to send their students home with broader minds and a greater sense of possibility—"challenging the preconceived notions of everything," says Osborne. They also hope to instill a greater respect for history. "It's important people reinvent the world" through counter-cultures like punk, says Gude, "but it's also important to know that you were not the first person to say, 'This is wrong.'"

Roar: "If you have something to say and a way to say it, it can get in here."

Meanwhile, north of the UIC campus in Chicago's diverse Logan Square neighborhood, Kelvyn Park High School students walk the halls reading their own school-made zine, *Roar*.

Kelvyn Park teacher Jesse Senechal started his zine-making

class after a group of students approached him about forming a literary mag. They launched *Roar* as an extra-curricular activity in 1996, but as interest grew Senechal pushed to turn the project into a year-long class.

The student staff eventually began publishing photography, poetry, and investigative journalism, and *Roar* became the true voice of Kelvyn Park. "If you have something to say, and a way to say it," says Senechal, "it can get in here."

They now print 2,000 copies of *Roar*, which contains everything from an advice column for teen mothers to photo-essays on tattoo art, all in a mix of English and Spanish.

The magazine attracts a dedicated crew from this largely Latino school. "A lot of *Roar* kids are rockers," says Senechal. "We seem to draw a lot of misfits."

Misfits they may be, but these kids are exuding a depth of talent rarely seen—or rarely let out. They are learning just what the Spiral teachers hope to pass along: you have a voice, and it can be heard—for very little money.

It took some time before Senechal realized *Roar* wasn't a typical school newspaper. "I discovered it was a zine a couple years into it, when people were like, 'Oh, I like your zine.' After I looked at it as a zine, it really opened it up. It became more about the students and what they want to do with it."

Senechal sees zine-making as a way to defeat America's

WHETHER PRACTICING ART, WRITING, OR PUBLISHING, THESE KIDS ARE ALL LEARNING THAT BEING PUNK IS SOMETHING WE ALL SHOULD STRIVE FOR. THEY ARE LEARNING SELF-EXPRESSION, ABOUT THE AWFUL CORPORATE CONTAMINATION OF OUR CULTURE, AND THAT THE BEST WAY TO AVOID SOMETHING IS TO CREATE SOMETHING ELSE.

bombardment of mainstream media and a way to create instead of consume. "In the culture we have today, there is a disconnect. Nobody can be completely free of it, but we can all be critical of it. Zine-making is that disconnect."

Such a disconnect is most vital for young adults—pop culture's chief target. "It's especially good for my students, who are inner city kids. Most of them live in poverty, and they are really silenced. Shuffled through institutions. It's great to give them the ability to have options."

What more apt way to give them options than to teach them DIY culture, particularly zine-making? Senechal emphasized to his students that zines are less about the stock of the paper than the motivation within the pages. "When it's in a class, something that kids are getting credit for, it kills the idea that it's a zine," he says. "So I take it out of the classroom mind set as much as possible. Then, the motivation is not for the grade or the credit or because I am telling them to do it, but for self-expression."

Say What: "They really think they can change the world."

Four train stops down from *Roar*, above a bar in the suddenlygentrified Wicker Park neighborhood, the cream of Chicago Public School's writing crop are learning the benefits of doing it yourself at Young Chicago Authors.

Young Chicago Authors (YCA) was founded in 1991 as a rigorous three-year workshop for selected young adults with promising writing skills. Over the next few years, YCA began holding workshops in the schools, providing summer writing classes, and hosting author readings and campus tours.

Now, the heavily funded organization holds an annual slam poetry competition, a writing program for incarcerated teens, and Say What, a teen zine that makes "adult" mags look like Highlights. While YCA helps them find their voice, Say What gives them an outlet to use it.

"They are so much smarter than I expected," says David Schober, current Editor of Say What, of his all-kid staff. "Their understanding of the world—they have optimism while being critical of everything. They really think they can change the world."

Say What is a literary journal and general interest zine for young writers. The eight-to-16-person staff (depending on the time of

year) publishes original poetry and prose as well as profiles on established authors, tips for writer's block, and an ask-the-poet column. One recent issue included an essay deconstructing the myth of Tupac and a story on Emily Dickinson—a poet's dream roster.

Schober is not quick to call Say What a zine, but its slick design and strong paper only further prove that it's the heart and aim of the content, not the appearance, that make a zine a zine. As the Spiral teachers might say, the mohawk doesn't necessarily make the man.

Instead of changing education from the inside, like *Roar* and the Spiral Workshop, *Say What* gives kids an alternative to the dullness of learning English school. It hipifies things like plot diagrams and the *Scarlet Letter*. With 7,000 copies made and an estimated 20,000 readership, *Say What* and its YCA ethic eventually *does* get into the schools—through kids' backpacks. Hopefully, some teachers will read the zine, too.

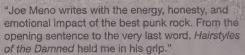
Not only do these kids get the perks of seeing their work in print, they are learning the ins and outs of publishing. The Say What staff has workshops with designers [full disclosure: including Punk Planet's art editor] and professional writers, and is required to learn and stick to AP style. Senechal teaches his Roar students Photoshop and Quark XPress, giving them the tools to eventually make their own zines.

"That would be my dream," he says, "to walk into [a bookstore] one day and see one of my kid's zines."

If everything goes as their teachers hope, this crew of DIY kids will find each other while finding themselves. They will create a citywide network of zinesters ready to douse Chicago with mediafree art.

Whether practicing art, writing, or publishing, these kids are all learning that being punk is something we all should strive for. They are learning self-expression, about the awful corporate contamination of our culture, and that the best way to avoid something is to create something else.

And they have their punk elders to thank, folks who "grew up" and proved that you can have a 401K plan without co-opting yourself. "They don't have to normalize themselves to be teachers," says Gude, "but they can take their radical sensibilities into the classroom."



- Jim DeRogatis, pop music critic, Chicago Sun-Times

"This book is hella good. Joe Meno is the new insightful voice for the punk community. He manages to sink into the teenage-outcast experience, challenge segregation, and provide step-by-step instructions on dyeing hair pink in this realistic account of finding your identity. After reading Hairstyles of the Damned, I'm glad I'm not in high school anymore."

-Amy Schroeder, Venus magazine

MARK ANDERSE

hairstyles of the damned

a novel by joe meno

Recommends Froid's Olsos for Polk's Commissioner

> An ambitious, accessible mix of history, autobiography, and how-to-manual, this "anti-manifesto" challenges popular concepts of radical activism. Long-time innercity organizer and punk rabble-rouser Mark Andersen takes aim at the illusions that tend to keep North American radicals self-satisfied but ineffective. A whirlwind tour across decades-through punk and student activism, identity and lifestyle politics, animal rights, armed struggle, patriotism, globalization, and beyond-this book seeks a radicalism that is both rigorously selfcritical and genuinely populist. Leaping from agrarian socialist experiments of the early twentieth century to embattled 1960s streets to the fiercely independent punk underground of the 1980s and 190s to the present-day global-justice movement, All the Power suggests how the seemingly most idealistic of enterprises—revolution—might be practically accomplished.

BOTH BOOKS OUT NOW ON PUNK PLANET BOOKS WWW.PUNKPLANETBOOKS.COM

brahim Parlak's customers and friends know him as the gentle, hard-working Kurdish immigrant from Turkey who runs Café Gulistan in the placid lakeside town of Harbert, Michigan. He spends long hours doing everything from making falafel and hummus to painting walls and ceilings to planting flowers and herbs in the garden out front. The café has been a local institution for a decade, drawing loyal long-time residents and well-off Chicagoans with vacation beach houses; film critic Roger Ebert and novelist Andrew Greeley are two fans.

Parlak immigrated to the Midwest in 1991 as a political refugee from Turkey, where he was persecuted for his work promoting Kurdish cultural identity in a country where until recently even speaking Kurdish in the home was grounds for lengthy imprisonment. Like many immigrants, he was interviewed extensively after the September II attacks. He wasn't found to have any questionable links, and his friends say that like most people who know him. Even the FBI agent he had most contact with became fond of him and the two had a friendly relationship.

So when that agent asked Parlak to come into the nearest FBI office on July 29, he wasn't overly concerned. But later that day, he found himself in immigration detention facing possible deportation to Turkey, where human rights groups say he would likely face further persecution including perhaps torture or execution.

The grounds on which he is being held are murky, and his initial hearing before an immigration judge on August IO in Detroit did little to shed light on the case. He is not being held under the Patriot Act or labeled a threat to national security, instead it appears that an administrative document recently sent from the Turkish government relating to his past imprisonment raised a red flag with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials, even though it contained no new or different information from what he had already revealed on his successful application for political asylum I3 years ago. The FBI has recently undertaken a new round of interviews of Middle Eastern and Arab immigrants similar to the wide-ranging registrations and interrogations which were instituted after September II; it is possible Parlak's detention comes as part of this initiative.

Parlak's supporters say his detention is unwarranted and chilling, since there is no new information in his case and he has been a successful business owner and community leader in the US for almost 13 years with no legal problems of any kind. He is also the father of a seven-year-old girl who is a US citizen. His friends are baffled as to why he is being detained. Some speculate his detention may be linked to U.S. relations with Turkey, specifically the U.S. State Department's recent promises to help Turkey eradicate the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in the region of Turkey bordering Iraq, arguably as a way to gain Turkish cooperation in the war on Iraq. Parlak, now 42, had links to the PKK in the mid-1980s, though he maintains he was never a member. In 1997, the PKK (now known as KONGRA-GEL) was declared a terrorist group by the US.

"The PKK was the largest group at the time, so he worked with them to help accomplish his own goals, to get resources and funds," says Parlak's friend Martin Dzuris, a Czech native who says he can relate to Parlak's experience in Turkey, since he escaped the oppressive Communist regime in his own country. "But he never joined the PKK because he didn't agree with some of their tactics. He was completely non-violent, he never agreed with using violence. And the PKK wasn't declared a terrorist group until *nine* years after his last contact with it. By that point it had changed its tactics in response to increasing repression from the Turkish government."

Parlak grew up in a rural area in eastern Turkey, one of 10 children in a farming family.

"They grew watermelon and garbanzo beans," says Michelle Gazzolo, the mother of Parlak's daughter Livia. "He would talk about how he used to like sitting under a tree eating watermelons and cheese."

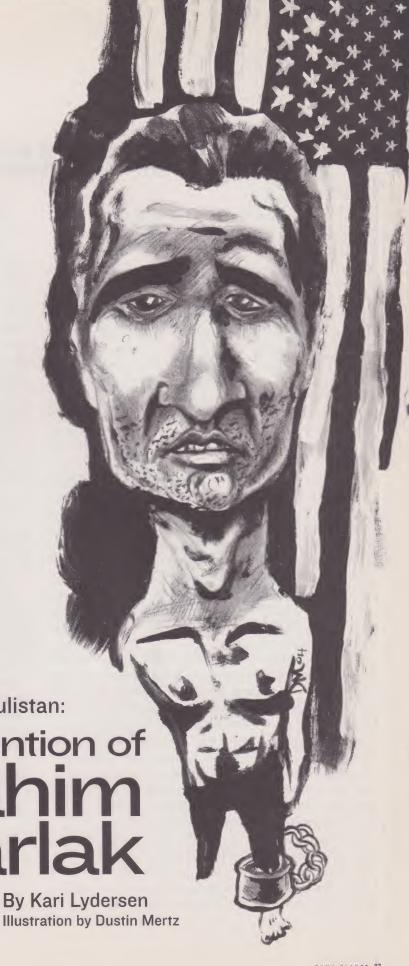
Parlak never learned the Kurdish language or much about Kurdish culture growing up. There are about 30 million Kurds living in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq who have long been pushing for varying degrees of autonomy or separatism. The Turkish government was so intent on crushing the idea of an independent Kurdistan and forcing Kurds to assimilate that it made speaking Kurdish or in any way practicing a Kurdish identity a crime punishable by imprisonment and even death. Teachers sent to the rural communities by the government reportedly did double duty as spies, listening at the windows of families' homes to see if they spoke Kurdish. In 1994 four former lawmakers including Leyla Zana, the first Kurdish woman to be elected to Parliament, were sentenced to prison terms for alleged membership in the PKK. Zana, who was lauded by international human rights groups, caused a furor by speaking Kurdish at her swearing-in ceremony in 1991. She said, in Kurdish, "I shall struggle so that the Kurdish and Turkish people can live peacefully together in a democratic framework."

Under demands from the European Court of Human Rights, the cases were retried in 2003, but Zana and the others were not released.

While Turkey has recently improved its human rights record slightly in order to gain entry into the European Union, Human Rights Watch and other groups say that Kurds there still suffer extreme repression and persecution.

Last March, as Turkey was trying to clean up its act for EU membership, Noam Chomsky wrote about the situation after a visit to the country: "[In] Diyarbakir, many of those driven from the countryside live in caves in the outer walls of the city and in its slums, still barred from return to their villages despite programmes that have been officially announced but not implemented. Human Rights Watch described this non-implementation as perhaps the most serious of the current human rights violations in Turkey. Conditions appear to be even worse for the unknown numbers trying to survive in condemned buildings in the miserable slums of Istanbul, where large families are crammed into a room, young children are virtually imprisoned unable to venture into the grim alleyways outside, while some older brothers and sisters work in illegal factories to help keep the family alive."

This is the climate Parlak grew up in. As a student he attended a peaceful demonstration advocating for Kurdish rights where he was



The War on Terror Hits Café Gulistan:

The Detention of Ibrahim Parlak

Illustration by Dustin Mertz

Parlak was ordered detained without bond on the grounds he constitutes a flight risk, a judgment that his friends say is ridiculous.

arrested and beaten. After a stint in jail, he fled the country for West Germany, where he began to learn the Kurdish language and more about Kurdish culture. He spent the next few years in various western European countries including Switzerland and France, speaking about Kurdish rights and organizing Kurdish cook-outs, dances, and other cultural events. When his Turkish passport expired he went to a Turkish consulate abroad to try to renew it, but was denied. As a result, when Parlak decided to re-enter Turkey in 1988 to do advocacy work in his homeland, he had to enter illegally. That's when Dzuris says he ended up "at the wrong place at the wrong time."

"The only way he could enter illegally was through Syria," says Dzuris, who notes that he is proud to be a US citizen and Republican voter and doesn't see the case as a "partisan" issue. "He and his friend were looking for a place without border guards, because they didn't want any trouble. They thought they had found a place, but then border guards appeared unexpectedly."

A shoot-out with smugglers ensued and two Turkish border guards were killed. Parlak was arrested with a gun in his possession—which he says wasn't loaded—and charged with aiding and abetting the PKK. He was sentenced to four years and two months in prison with four-fifths of the sentence suspended.

Parlak was released after about two years and fled to the US, where he requested political asylum in 1991 and was granted it in 1992. He originally settled in Chicago, where he worked in restaurants and met Gazzolo. The two moved to Michicagn in 1994, where he started Café Gulistan in Harbert and for a few years also ran another cafe in Kalamazoo.

The development which appears to have triggered Parlak's recent detention was a notice from the Turkish government sent to the US government in March. According to Parlak's attorneys, the document was meant to inform Parlak that a Turkish appeals court had revisited his sentence and changed it to a six-year sentence with four fifths suspended. That means Parlak had still served more than the required amount, and his attorneys say the Turkish government was not asking for his return or imprisonment, but simply fulfilling an administrative duty to inform him of the ruling. (Repeated calls to the Turkish consulate in Chicago and the Turkish embassy in Washington DC were not returned.)

At his initial Aug. 10 hearing in Detroit, an immigration judge scolded prosecutors for presenting her a very poorly translated version of the document from the Turkish government and Parlak's case was delayed pending the prosecution's producing a certified translation of the correspondence. But Parlak was

ordered detained without bond on the grounds he constitutes a flight risk, a judgment that his friends say is ridiculous.

His case is also complicated by a problem with his citizenship application which has been pending for six years. Immigration officials say that Parlak lied on his application for permanent residency when he said he had never been convicted of a felony. Parlak's lawyer Noel Saleh has told media that Parlak, who didn't speak English well at the time, thought the question was whether he had been convicted of a felony in the US. His supporters note that DHS (formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service) has been aware of Parlak's alleged lie for years and this is not the basis for his detention.

"The information he used to get into the US was a forgery," says Ernestine Fobbs, spokesperson for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Washington, DC, who agreed to comment only briefly on the case. We're also reviewing charges related to membership in the PKK." Calls to the Detroit office of the DHS were not returned in time for this story.

Parlak's supporters don't think the DHS sees him as a real threat to national security.

"What's the first thing they do when they arrest a terrorist in the US?" asked Dzuris. "They confiscate his computer, search his house. They didn't do any of that with Ibrahim. They don't really consider him a risk."

Since Parlak's arrest, Café Gulistan has been swamped by local well-wishers, and various homes and businesses in Harbert bear homemade signs saying "Free Ibrahim." About 50 supporters attended his first hearing, and scores of supporters including Ebert and Greeley have made statements on his behalf. His niece, nephew, and brother, who also work at the café, have been working overtime to keep it running in his absence, and Garzollo says she is determined to avoid selling the café or Parlak's home even though he has instructed her to do so if necessary. On a sunny afternoon in August, friends and neighbors sitting at the picnic tables surrounded by the hollyhocks and sunflowers Parlak had planted ruminated on the way a community who never expected to be affected by the war on terrorism have been stung.

"It's very distressing that someone who's been a contributor to this society, a business owner and a taxpayer, doesn't seem to have rights," said Gazzolo. "It's like we're living in a different country within our country—a reality I never thought existed here. He was whisked away in Turkey and tortured. He came here to escape that, but now he's been whisked away again."

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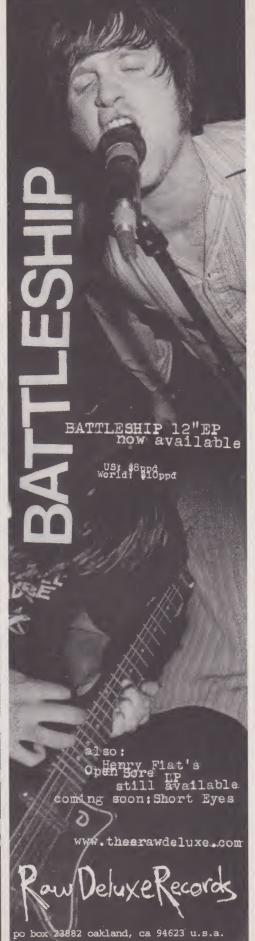
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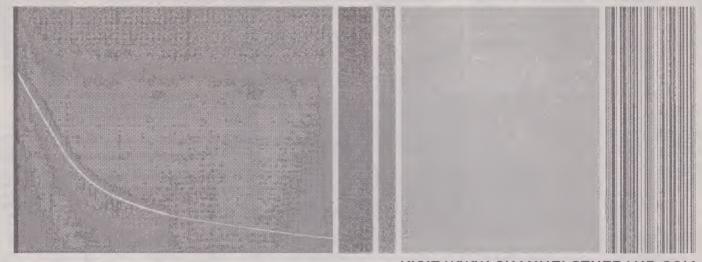




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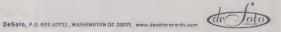


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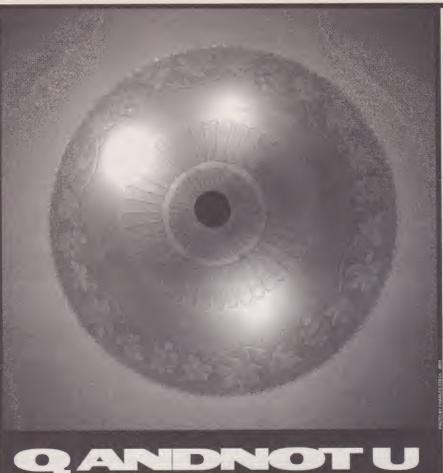


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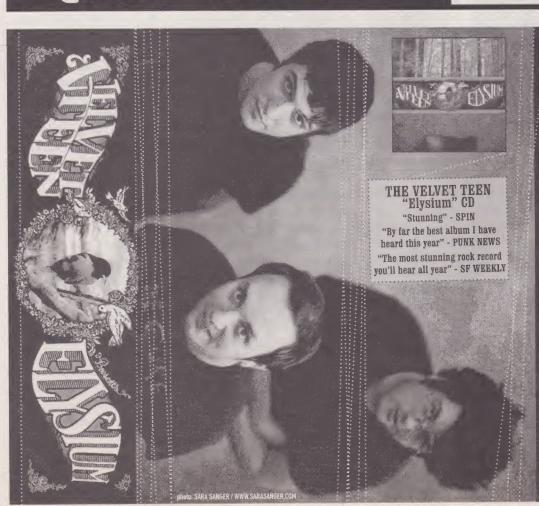
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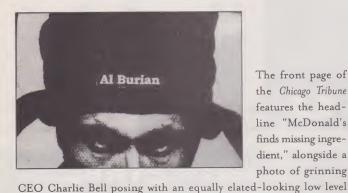
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columns

all burian iessica hopper joe meno janelle larry livermore



The front page of the Chicago Tribune features the headline "McDonald's finds missing ingredient," alongside a photo of grinning

employee. Assuming this missing ingredient to be metaphorical, I read the story, wondering what combination of factors is going to be touted as responsible for what the Tribune calls "one of the most stunning turnarounds in corporate history"-new all-robot kitchen staff? Aggressive marketing to the infirm and elderly? Mad-cow neutralizing agents which have allowed the company to buy cut-rate infected beef?-but no, it turns out it's an actual literal ingredient that has been found. In fact, a whole recipe: the "special sauce," corporate urban legend of the most profound and mythic, otherwise known as some combination of mayonnaise, ketchup and flavor-enhancing "secret ingredients." The exact chemical make up of the "special sauce," is a closely guarded industrial secret, so much so that even high level executives of the company are unaware of its exact composition. But retired CEO Fred Turner "could taste it," apparently, when "corporate headquarters changed the recipe to cut costs." Gastronomically enraged, Turner confronted the board of directors, who confessed that the recipe to the secret sauce had actually been lost completely, misfiled somewhere within the bureaucratic ring of the scientific sub-community employed by the corporation. Without the bewitching, hypnotic taste of the flagship sauce at it's disposal, the company's mind-control grip on the populace had begun to weaken, stocks had plummeted,

and only the elderly and nostalgic still pined for the days when the cheeseburgers cost IO cents and the sauce had that extra "tang."

McDonald's miraculous economic recovery is the feel-good story of the 21st century: "losing the special sauce meant a loss of connection with the company's very roots," the Tribune tells us. And thus, an internal accounting of error has been undertaken, wrongs have been righted, ratios restored and roots reconnected. The special sauce is back. In an unrelated article, meanwhile, the United Nations Environmental Committee (UNEP) announces at an emergency meeting that the world population of apes is being "eaten into extinction." Klaus Toper, UNEP executive director, puts it in terms the Iron Maiden fan can understand when he states that "the clock is standing at one minute to midnight," for a group of animals who "share more than 96 percent of their DNA with humans."

Ninety-six, that's a high percentage, probably about as much as I would have guessed I share with the average human. I can't help but feel an affinity for my 96 percent relatives the gorilla and the chimpanzee, numbers now dwindling low enough so as to be extinct between 2010-2020. I feel like a chimp most of the time: trainable to an extent (I can tie my own shoes) but not fully functional (I can't work your cell phone). But should I be eaten for this offense? Senegal and Ghana, for instance, are estimated to have 200-400 chimpanzees left, mostly in remote regions where, in the human population's defense, it's hard to find a McDonald's and chimpanzee is a more viable fast food option. Human beings have annihilated the chimpanzee's natural habitat almost in its entirety, and arguably have annihilated their own natural habitat in its entirety as well, although we've thoughtfully left food marts and vending machines with bottled water around for the apes up to the 97 percent genetic standard.

You can almost feel a certain level of sympathy for the aging

McDonald's executives, old men who are confused about how to access their e-mail accounts, who still operate on the ancient standards of what they can smell and taste. The "secret sauce" cover story in the Tribune is feel-good reporting, designed to inspire confidence in the somnambulant twitchings of the flaccid American economy, a hack job no doubt copied directly from the corporate press release, oozing with sentimentality and the simplistic notion that our present ills are a result of losing our way, of straying from the time-tested recipes and customer satisfaction formulas which made this country great in the first place. One wonders if a man like Fred Turner doesn't ever feel like a chimp himself, clinging to the shadow of a world that once was. Turner developed the staples of the McDonald's menu alongside founding hamburger mogul Ray Kroc, fine-tuned the condiments and side orders, and helped usher in a new voraciousness in multinational corporate expansion. The culinary history of the 20th century, after all, is the history of fast food's ascension to global dominance. Nostalgia for the days when things tasted better is too little too late, like pining for an orangutan in 2025. Live by the food chain, die by the food chain: suddenly the heads of McDonald's find themselves the chimps, the atavistic apes in the way of progress, mumbling lamely about tradition and quality as the bulldozers of the bottom line roll in.

Buried in the paper on May 26, 2004, meanwhile, is the news that the Chicago city council has voted to allow Wal-Mart to build their first store within city limits. "This is a free country, and we look for low prices," offers Chicago alderman Emma Mitts by way of explanation. Wal-Mart, the largest employer in America, can credit an old-fashioned recipe for its success, too: ruthless exploitation of employees, union-busting, outsourcing of labor to the third world, undercutting local competition to drive small

business out. There is no romance of the special sauce here. What is astounding about the economic progress of Wal-Mart, really, is just how blatant and brutal it is, and how unapologetic the executives in charge are. Here is a company with lawsuits pending for such pre-reconstruction practices as forcing workers to work off the clock overtime, hiring illegal immigrants and then forcing them to work seven day, 70-hour weeks, even locking janitors in over night (which Wal-Mart attorney David Murray, in the New York Times, defends as "simply an effort to keep the employees safe," a gambit likely to hold up in court only if he can prove that there were packs of wolves roaming the parking lots). At every juncture, with every new revelation of inhumanity, the powers that be at Wal-Mart hold their heads high and staunchly proclaim their inalienable right to treat people like cattle. Faced with the largest class action lawsuit in history over discriminatory policies towards women, Wal-Mart vice president of communications Mona Williams comments that women have themselves to blame for their "lack of interest in managerial jobs." "Many of these women had the opportunity to go into training to become assistant managers," she derides the she-chimps. "But they did not want to work odd shifts, like working all night long, Saturdays or Sundays." A woman involved in the lawsuit, on the other hand, remembers her manager at a South Carolina Wal-Mart explaining to her that "Wal-Mart paid men more than women because the Bible says God made Adam before Eve."

But the city of Chicago is going for it, because even with subhuman conditions, this will bring 300 new jobs to town (that's 100 times the amount of people Jessica Hopper employs, to put it in economic perspective, although it will probably only bring about as much income into the city as if Jessica Hopper employed 130 more people). "It's a great victory for us," gloats a Wal-Mart exec in the

I'm glad I made the cut, I guess, to be one of the mammals who might find a sandwich improved by a secret sauce rather than being better tasting if served with a secret sauce. Still, the prospect of the uninhabitable world I'll be stuck with until I chimp out between 2030-2050 is not a pleasant one. Klaus Toepfer seems to feel some remorse, too: "We will be destroying a bridge to our own origins," he laments about the coming ape extinction, "and with it a part of our own humanity." Ah, yes, humanity. There is a darker side to this whole story, even: Jim Cantalupo, the chief executive who helped institute the turnaround at McDonald's once Fred Turner restored unto them the secret of the special sauce, keeled over dead of a heart attack on April 19, 2004, in the middle of the miracle recovery. Charlie Bell (CEO pictured on the Tribune cover) has taken the reigns, restoring calm and confidence for a good two weeks, before being diagnosed with colon cancer. He is optimistic about chemo-therapy: "The doctors have told me I won't lose my hair," he says. "This is a good thing, because I'm anxious to be the first McDonald's CEO in decades who actually has a full head of hair." Ketchup, initially introduced to the condiment world as a cover for rotten meat, then formally accepted into the vegetable kingdom by the late Ronald Reagan, now an indispensable ingredient of American cuisine, even a part of American "culture" or "heritage" when mixed with mayonnaise and II to 13 secret ingredients: front page news on the cover of the Tribune. I'll miss the apes.



Summer Notes

The last four months, I went on five tours, three of them playing bass in Challenger. The longest I was home between March

18th and August 2nd was nine days. Sundry details as follows:

This morning, c. 8:04am, plodding heavy lidded through Northstar Court, the mall within the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Aeroport, past the epic-lined breakfast rush at Burger King, I asked myself (maybe even out loud) what have I learned from all this traveling and touring of the last four months. The first real answer that came to mind:

- White people are ugly, mean and ungrateful and they always look unhappy, even when they are getting their way.
 - 2. Most men look sad and hungry. Esp. ones with briefcases.

Miles suggests the first T-shirts for our new band A Billion Dollars read "A Billion Dollars Got Love For Hos." I think that the Golden Age of Irony and the Afterglow of the Calculatedly Earnest Era should be put under quickly, and that we should herald the much needed Decade Long Bender of Welcoming Positivity (aka the future where no one is a ho, or at least no one uses ho in the pejorative, but rather in self-celebration only) and thusly I counter with: "A Billion Dollars is a Great Band That I Like"-or nothing at all. Better yet: Blank T-shirts for invigorating those with atrophied imaginations. At least that way the shirt is perfect, and also goes against the grain of band shirt as identity signifier/ the potent free ad space of the young chest-your fandom is secret and precious, sacred, freeing us all from the bilious profanity of the concept of BAND T-SHIRT. Is that too conceptual? I think 2005 is about telling the truth, because lying and having autonomy from reality-at-hand is very Current Administration, and thusly, should not be echoed or emulated on any level, intra-personal or in collective identity or spirit.

Last night, Sean and I were stranded for about an hour, waiting for a cab, at some mall-cineplex around Hershey PA, after a night off from his tour. We sat on the cooling blacktop and watched the teenagers disperse into parental loan-cars, a couple make out against a dumpster with their lips locked—hands going no further than shoulders. A half-hour after the last movie goers had cleared out, one of the worker kids, some 11th grader assistant manager, came back with his friends, to unlock the Century City Mall 6 and go in. We imagined them drinking lite beers pilfered from someone's older brother and running Harold and Kumar Go To White Castle. Later on past that, two loner best friend boys, maybe 13 or 15, walked laps, ambling through the lot, cutting back and forth from the JC Penny end to a light post in the middle, twice in 40 minutes. They walked close for boys that age. We speculated they were in love and did not know it.

In all of this I felt like I had glimpsed the nucleus of purity, lensed in a mall parking lot and it made me hopeful.

II:00 pm: Back on the bikes, they went home; I went to Kinko's for important faxing, saw Al, who was Xeroxing zines. He had sweated through his shirt with coffee fueled anxiety, as usual. I went over to JR's for lemonade, stole two cigarettes, borrowed a Gil Scott Heron record, we left. Back on the bikes. I held JR's bike while he went into the liquor store. Kids who really were just kids, rolling en masse (Denali, Celica, tricked out Cutlass) hung in the parking lot and greeted one another with a fluid and immaculate shake with butterfly hands that surrendered into a chest pound below the chains. A gentrified local exited the store and wiped out, flat onto his back, on a puddle, soiling his pleat-fronts and splintering his 12-pack of Lite. Everyone laughed, including me.

Back on the bike. Out in the city, everyone is on a date, and

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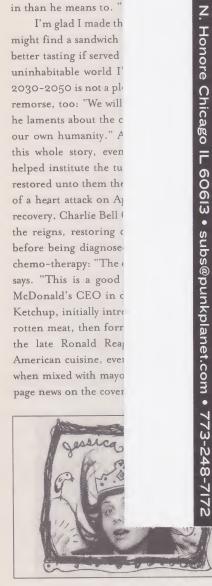
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I'm glad I made th

them playing bass in Challenger. The longest I was home between March

18th and August 2nd was nine days. Sundry details as follows:

This morning, c. 8:04am, plodding heavy lidded through Northstar Court, the mall within the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Aeroport, past the epic-lined breakfast rush at Burger King, I asked myself (maybe even out loud) what have I learned from all this traveling and touring of the last four months. The first real answer that came to mind:

- 1. White people are ugly, mean and ungrateful and they always look unhappy, even when they are getting their way.
 - 2. Most men look sad and hungry. Esp. ones with briefcases.

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all the dates are going to parties, on bikes, on polished toes peeking from sandal heels, all the girls with bare shoulders. It must be a great thing to love those girls.

After practice, I went to the bar, which I love because the water at the bar has ice in it, and I do not have ice for the water at my house. Being a non-drinker, clarity and a casual time with 40 minutes 'til last call is ripe, saddening and bemusing. The slackened muscles in the face of the fake Karen O that always tries to pick up Miles and others, the bored looking loners tapping S-O-S's into the ashtray rims, observing their own smoking with care, the band guys talking about their new guitars and their next tour and the next right move, the people who are way too drunk for a Thursday, the scene-dixx who watch the door over your shoulder while they nod and dole out sympathetic "totally, totally" mots atchoo. The twighlighted post college years, before the Jim Beam steals your looks, when the beer is still a party and not yet habitual, adult problems not yet slaying you.

Yeah.

Everyone is still cool.

It's all still cool, man.

We ate at an IHOP in Pompano Beach, outside of the concert campus fairgrounds, along a commercial strip that offered used cars, all of them littered with red, white and blue, deflating, flaccid balloon carcasses and strings—killed by the torrential downpour, now finding graves on hot car hoods. Six lanes of freeway lined with fantastic verdancy strung with Spanish moss, all of it newly minted by the rain.

Coming back from the IHOP, long after Warped closed up shop, the last of the mohicans were loitering in front of a pizza place. One stopped us and asked, almost yelling, popping teen energy like a geyser: "Hey, did you walk all the way down there? You didn't see the bassist of Anti-Flag did you?" We did not know where there was, or all the way down there for that matter, or which young man with the mohawk was in Anti-Flag.

I tried to imagine why he needed this information, and why he had been standing at the corner for an hour, with this as the urgent question in his mind. If we had said, yes, yes—what would it have validated for him? Instead, we shrugged, in unison.

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Scholarship, or maybe the sort of person who has like, Kleenex box cozies... I carried it around with me all day and whenever someone would ask how I was doing—I just flashed the picture.

Also en route: Freshman girls at baggage claim in *de rigueur* hangover clothes—messy ponytail, U of M sweats (aka "public jammies"), one seen traveling with a 36-inch tall plush brown stuffed bear. I imagined she was on her way to camp, now after seven years—she is finally a counselor. All her old friends from camp even know her bear's name.

Event horizon: packs and pairs of unaccompanied minors, pink faces mashed and squirting hot wet tears, too-large back packs with activity books popping out, being marched off through metal detectors, yelling for mom—the shuffle of joint custody. I could hardly watch.

Still terrible: I thought it only happened in Chicago laundromats after midnight, but parents let little kids eat Doritos and Pepsi for breakfast. I have seen diaper aged shorties all over the USA eating fucking Slim Jims and Mountain Dew EXtreme at 7:30 am in BP parking lots, and it is upsetting.

On our way back to the hotel, about 4:00 am Manhattan time, I cry from this thought: Sean has spent the last seven years living a life that is mostly tour. He has a humanity that is thralling and pyrous in spite of this, in spite of what constant tour robs you of. He is all kindness where I am all squirrelly noblesse oblige with the cab drivers. The world breaks his heart, too, I watch, everyday. On his tours, after he plays, he stands by the merch booth and gives the kids firm handshakes and hugs when they ask and jovial realness that no one ever seems to afford teenagers. I am in awe of him. I want to be that thing too.

Al and I wrote a chunk of a song over the weekend, which we all worked on last night. Dave asked us what part comes after the chorus, and I said, "I was thinking some big explosive solo" (in all seriousness). He looked perplexed, so I made noises/sang him the "reeee-rowwwhhh-reee-reee-rooo" of my imagined "next parts" because I do not know the notes for him or I to play. "Do you know the notes? Do you guys have something worked out?" he asks. No. No. I just trust everyone can just jam shit out and make it feel pretty genius. That's not the right answer. Way too jazz, mebbe.

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just a curiosity to me, now sits at the top of my list for trash food. Al and I sat at the counter and watched a girl who was clearly, at one time, the most popular girl in her high school—wide set deer eyes fluttering in the grill heat, artificial blond mane ponytail hanging most of the way to her pert ass, lanky arms pressing the handle of the waffle makers dutifully. Her mom, maybe her aunt, cousin—a woman who looked like a very tired version of the girl, she was our waitress. The girl sighed the sighs of someone who failed to get out. They floated to us over the jukebox's strain of "House of The Rising Sun." She looked like a Disney drawing of a girl, but sort of sad and shunted and stunned. Al and I wished that we were Hollywood agents, modeling scouts—something, so we could fairy tale her—"Girl, You have the look we are searching for..." and take her from short order hell to somewhere faraway from Kentucky heaven.

Back into the van. I rode shotgun. Kentucky is unaspiringly beautiful. I put on the goggles (a favorite van accoutrement) and stuck my head out the window like a dog, just because. I watched for opossums in the trees and lady truck drivers and said a prayer for every kid that every wanted to go on tour, for every girl that wanted to see Kentucky, for every kid that ever wanted to get the fuck out of here.

Harrisburg International to the smartly remodeled concourses in Pittsburgh to Home. Home—official.

All the children on the planes today were beautiful, sweetly minding patient pillow-breasted mommies. All the mothers were golden and had soothing voices, and I was flush with jealousy for childhood—namely theirs... Turkey-neck men on business travel who refused to loosen their ties despite a two-hour flight fetched Barbie backpacks from overhead, honoring their inchoate manduty. Spent at least half an hour talking myself out of speculating whether the stewardess' smiles were real. Was it possible that they found joy, tangible hard joy, in the little exchange of pretzels? I wanted the answer to be yes. Yes, there are people who smile 'til their eyes squinch up, for almost no discernable reason, and yes this is ok. "Real" does not exist. What would Buddha do? Yes, yes, the answer is elected as "yes."

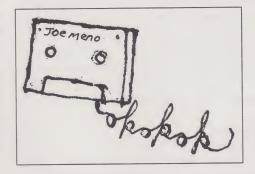
Today was my last day of Warped tour for the summer. My last tour day for a while. It is a good thing to be going home. Because, as Didion quoth, the center is not holding. It refuses to.

I have seen too much America. Ten thousand empty hours in venues and vans has turned some part of my humanity to sooty dust, and my heart to a scab and all I can seem to blame is that I have seen the inside of too many neon-lit Citgo filling station aisles, with it's no carb everything and extreme neon drinks and now I know that all adults are evil, only children are good, that many people think Slim Jims are food, that all media is a lie, that my eyes get wet with tears every time I see Paris Hilton's too tanned equine face on the cover of a magazine, cement depresses me unless I lay on it. Mountain Dew, groupies, holiday-themed candy, glimpses of the president and littering now strike me with equal heart-searing gravity.

Everywhere there is a war we do not know about, and every life is tiny and sad and amazing at the same time, and everyone is the same kind of lost. Watching people sing, with conviction, alone and loud, in their cars is my last vestige profoundly moving experience.

In current rotation: Sonic Youth- Sister, Joni Mitchell — Both Sides Now, Rjyan Kidwell's "Best of Grunge" vol.1, Mary Timony — Mountains, Deerhoof — Apple-O, PsalmOne-demo, Brother Ali — Champion EP. If you want to be in touch with me: Po Box 14624 Chicago Il 60614 / mcfrenchvanilla@yahoo.com

More writing at: http://tiny.abstractdynamics.org



Why I like America OK, after all

For nearly three months of being sick, I thought: OK, this is it, I've got colon cancer. My

grandpa had it. Now I have it. I am going to die just like every other sucker after all. At the time, I had just turned 26 and there was this terrible pain in my right side that lasted for weeks at a time. I had lost about 20 pounds. I was no longer sleeping at night because of the pain and I was no longer really eating. OK, so I don't know if I should give all the gory details here or what. Do you want the details? The details were this: a bad time in the bathroom, etc., etc., blood, mucus, things no young man should have to see staring back up at them, not exactly the kind of problem you want to mention to you friends, an illness that is a real bummer to have to explain to your doctor, and my doctor did not even speak English. I was working at the Alley, this head shop and concert T-shirt store in Chicago, and didn't have health insurance so I went to this health clinic right down the street where for 40 bucks you would like point to what was hurting and then the doctor would give you a shot, no matter what your symptoms were. That was totally cool with me. I was sick all the time, it seemed. Sore throats, ear aches, thrush: if it was contagious, I had it. And no matter where I'd point and say in my hacked-up Spanish "You tengo dolor in me..." I'd always get a huge shot of antibiotics.

But when I went into the clinic and tried to explain what was going wrong with the old plumbing, the doctor couldn't really help. He offered me some free samples of Prevacid for heartburn and said I had to go to Cook County.

Cook County, at the time, was the only free hospital in Chicago and unless you were ever there it's hard to imagine it was really as bad and crazy as it was: imagine sitting in the emergency waiting room between a prisoner in an orange jumpsuit and leg chains eyeballing you hard, a 90 year-old lady who will not stop screaming about her grandson who was just brought in DOA, and

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a woman holding a towel full of blood to the shoulder where she has been shot. Imagine the institutional brown and yellow tiles, the worn-out plastic seats, the desolate waiting rooms and dirty hall-ways as musty as a thrift store; the zombified looks of the sick, mentally ill, the elderly, waiting in line for up to four hours at time just to get their prescriptions filled.

I strolled into the emergency room, walked up to the nurse at the triage desk, and said, "I am bleeding from my anus badly," and they put me on a stretcher and wheeled me around back pretty quick. I don't know if this works all the time or the woman could see how nasty sick I was, but I suggest if you find yourself in the same situation, you try it. They gave me an IV and some meds and scheduled me for a colonoscopy.

Yikes!

Now most men are given colonoscopies, when they're 50. What they do is stick a camera at the end of a coiled cable up your ass and work it up inside your large and small intestines, like 50, 60 feet up inside your guts. Preparing for the colonoscopy was actually worse than the operation. I had to drink a gallon of this stuff called Go-Lightly which looked like water but which cleaned out your entire gastric system with a terrible flushing action. Then, if that was not enough, I got to rock a few enemas. Like two, the morning of the operation. Awesome!

The actual operation went quick. I got on a gurney, they hooked me up to an IV with some Demerol, they wheeled me into a little room, asked me to lie on my left side, and whammo! Instant party. It was three doctors watching the TV movie of my insides and I get to check it all out, from a kind of muscle-relaxed haze. While they were watching the little camera photograph the craggy red patterns of my large intestine, one of the doctors thought to ask, "Do you engage in anal sex?" and because I was kinda' doped up I said, "Not today," and then I started laughing like a nimrod to myself because what else can you do when there's a bunch of strangers staring up your butt.

So what was the cause of my illness then? Well, there's this really vile bacteria called c. diff which infects the intestines when the naturally-occurring bacteria is wiped out by the over-consumption of antibiotics. It was all my own fault, visiting a doctor who I knew was going to hit me up with antibiotics for everything. But that's us, I guess. As Americans we are impatient, whiny, demanding and not very accepting of suffering. It's the reason a vast part of the country is medicated for so many different reasons. We're not very good at being unhappy.

Here's the thing though, I look back on the whole ordeal, the hours and hours spent waiting at Cook County with fondness. Because, in between awkward examinations from doctors I would never see again, and having to sit on the crummy floor because all the seats were full, and the impotent stench of certain death in the air, there were the old black ladies who would talk to me like a grandson, "Baby, you too young to be in here," while they knitted or complained about their children. After going to the GI clinic week after week, people would become familiar, not that I'd know their name or anything, but I'd be like, "Oh, that's the lady with the

hole in her large intestine," or "That guy, that guy with the doo-rag has got polyps." A strange thing began to happen, where as strangers we were united, if only in the fact that someday soon we are all going to die, some clearly sooner than others. There was something beautiful in that irrevocable, unmatched equality: me, sitting on the floor while some old black lady asked me to hold her yarn so she could buy a bag of fruit from some guy walking around the hospital selling produce out of a wet cardboard box; here we all were, a little broken, a little shamed, but together, even at our weakest, in mixed company. Here is your America! I thought. The waiting room of the free hospital! The new Ellis Island! We are like the pilgrims! We are like the American settlers roughing it out together, and then someone's name would be called and it wouldn't be my name, and I'd think Yes, we are American! We are democratic! Our operations here are free! We suffer together in our sickness and grief! America, you might be OK. For awhile longer, you might be OK with me, and then my name would be called and I'd disappear behind the green curtain, feeling like a gameshow winner, proud of these very small thoughts.

OK! The ballots are in! The winner of our "Robot Town Theme Song Contest" is Smoke, from Farmington, New Mexico, with his very brilliant, very angular, "Next Stop: Robot Town," with a runner-up award going to Joe Cycenas, from Las Vegas, Nevada, for his sex-infused robot masterpiece "Gay Robot." Thanks to all who entered for your sense of humor and imagination: it's hopeful to know the world is not half as dreary as it seems.

Pick up my book, Hairstyles of the Damned, from www.punkplanetbooks.com



As summer draws to a close, it is time to renew an old tradition. While you were busy traipsing the countryside, playing basements and drinking on rooftops, I was holding down the fort.

Booking shows, rolling sushi, leaving mints on pillows, and generally trying to make sure everyone was comfortable and having fun. Sometimes people had a good time, sometimes not. But this column isn't about me, it's about you. That's right, you had your say about my poorly stocked kitchen, filthy room, and dubious abilities to book a decent show. Now it's time for a response of Roxanne Shante proportions.

HOUSEGUEST REVIEWS Summer 2004.

Lipstick Pickups

It's a wonder The Pickups didn't enter my house on the run, chased by a pack of bloodhounds, for they are foxes with a capital B-O-N-E-R. Seriously, could there be a finer band? Tucking the cleavage away and concentrating on their skills as houseguests, the

Pickups provide serious competition. When it was time to buy makings for sushi, Erin pushed me aside and, in true player fashion, pulled out a roll of bills. What? Are you my houseguest or my new Daddy? I don't know what gave me a worse toothache, the plum wine or the Pickups, because they were both too sweet.

PCPenis

PCPenis know about the finer things in life, like sake and Swayze. If Chris Murphy had a cable access show, I would always be poised on the couch waiting for it to come on. Richard Pryor, Burt Reynolds, Rip Taylor—how come so many moustachioed men are so entertaining? They didn't say good-bye before they left, but I like to believe they were just too choked-up for words.

Ben Snakepit

Ben does a comic called Snakepit and was supposed to stay at my house for two weeks. We've been pen pals for a while, but when we met in person one night in Chicago last summer, he called our rendezvous "anticlimactic"-IN PRINT! Me? Anticlimactic? I'm not accustomed to this sort of lukewarm response. Usually it's either, "Me and Janelle had the best time. It felt like we've known each other our whole lives," or "Janelle puked into our sink full of dishes and then told my girlfriend she should dump me. What a shithead," so I was determined we would get along better this time. However, when Ben finally did come to town, he was only here for one day. How was I going to pack two weeks worth of good times into a 24 hour period? And how was I going to accomplish this while nursing a hangover? But my skill as a hostess is not the issue at hand. As a houseguest, Ben scored major, major points by showing up with presents. Not just any presents, but copies of Over The Edge and The Legend Of Billie Jean, two oft-sought, seldom-found, juvenile delinquent classics. Also, he bought a 12-pack of beer. Very classy, I thought, when I saw the box sitting on the kitchen table. But when I reached in for a brew, I grabbed nothing but air. The ol' switcheroo. I should've known.

Rotten Living & John Denver's Airplane

There were II people in this entourage and four dogs. There were enough people to have started a baseball team. If they wanted to start a basketball team instead, they would still have someone left-over to be towel boy. Or they could've started three separate Barbershop Quartets. Or manned a ship. That's a lot of people. The dogs scored points by being cute and well-mannered (especially the one who carried a cigarette pack in his mouth), but lost a few by shitting all over the courtyard. Everyone else scored major points in being funny and interesting and cleaning up after themselves, but lost a few when Lee tricked me into looking at his poop.

Adee

My love for Adee is like a tornado ripping through an Oklahoma trailer park uprooting everything in its path. She is the Real Deal. She was exciting when it was time to be exciting, chill when it was time to be chill. She laughed so hard at my jokes I felt like I was perpetually sitting on a whoopee cushion. And the woman could cook like there was no tomorrow: tofu potpie, sushi, biscuits, gravy, pigs in a blanket. She stepped up to the deep fryer like she was god. At first, Adee was afraid to stay at my house. Not because it's dirty, not because our couches are uninviting, but because of ghosts. Ghosts?! Mostly people tell me they're washing their hair if they don't want to stay over. But not Adee. She cited ghosts as her obstacle. I am not shitting you. However, after being at our house a few times and never seeing any levitating furniture, bleeding walls, or having a midget tell her to "go into the light," she decided it might be safe to stay over. OK, maybe I hid her bag so she couldn't go home, but a kidnapped houseguest is a houseguest all the same. Come back soon! We miss you!

Hear the Lipstick Pickups at www.lipstickpickups.com.
Read Adee's fanzine, Finger On The Trigger, about Haiti, race, bike trips, and more by writing to: Adee/ 223 Jane Pl/ New Orleans, LA. 70119.
PCPenis has a record on This Here! out of Chattanooga.
Rotten Living have an LP on Raw Sugar (see Adee's address).
Ben has a Snakepit book put out by Gorsky Press in LA.

visit my new website at www.gimmeaction.com



My friend Paul works as a bouncer in one of London's sleazier gay bars. It's not a full-fledged sex club, but it does tolerate a certain

amount of hanky-panky in the toilets and other dark corners. But in order to keep its liquor license, the bar has to make sure that when the police make one of their periodic visits, they don't stumble over a couple of guys bumping uglies in plain view.

It's a delicate balancing act. If it became known that sex was no longer tolerated, the bar would lose half its customers. But let the public sex get out of hand, and the place gets shut down for good.

So Paul's job, in addition to weeding out drunk yuppies and homophobes at the front door, is to patrol the toilets and stairwells and make sure the patrons are being reasonably discreet. It's not the greatest job in the world, but it's good money, and until he finishes his training as an electrician, he's willing to put up with it.

You might think that convincing poofters to pull their pants up and stop humping each other in the middle of a crowded

columns PP64

room would be no great challenge, but you'd be wrong. It's never happened to me (honest!), but if I were interrupted in the middle of a sexual act by a burly bouncer telling me to put that thing away, I'd be so embarrassed that I'd seriously consider never having sex again.

Not so the customers at Paul's bar. By the time he encounters them, they've often been drinking or drugging for hours if not days. They're lucky if they have a clear idea of who or where they are, let alone the social nuances of what they're doing.

So, not all of them take kindly to having their fun curtailed. If you've ever had to break up a pair of dogs midway through mating, you have some idea of what's involved, except that some of the clientele at Paul's bar are more likely to turn around and bite you.

Paul's not the only bouncer there, but he's the smallest, even if his arms are as big around as my legs and his chest the size of a beer barrel. But he's only about 5'10" and barely 200 pounds. Stef, on the other hand, is a Maori ex-rugby player who stands 6'4" and weighs 280 pounds, and Ahmed, an Algerian with the filthiest collection of camel jokes you'd never want to hear, is bigger than that.

Nevertheless, when it's time to break up rutting couples, they like to send Paul, because he's the roughest and scariest of the three ("It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog," Paul's dad always told him).

When I visit Paul I hang out with him at the front door, but every so often our conversations are interrupted when he's called away to clear up some ruckus in the men's room. When that happened last Saturday night, he was gone longer than usual.

I waited, chatting with Stef about New Zealand, until an angry, red-faced customer came half-stumbling, half-flying out the door. Usually when people get unceremoniously evicted from the bar, they keep on going rather than hang around so that everyone can witness their humiliation.

But not this guy. He stood his ground, even when Paul came out after him, doing that bulged-out-eyes thing that makes him look like a crazy man and usually is sufficient to frighten off troublemakers twice his size.

"You know what kind of wanker you are?" the unhappy patron demanded.

"I know exactly what kind of wanker I am," said Paul. "Now piss off."

"You know what kind of wanker you are?" the drunk repeated. And repeated, and repeated.

Paul was being unusually patient tonight. He could have picked the guy up and deposited him somewhere off the premises, but instead he just stood there smiling calmly until the man shuffled off, still stopping every few feet to call back, "You know what kind of wanker you are?"

When he was finally gone, I said to Paul, "Now he's got me curious. Just what kind of wanker are you?"

(One of the advantages of having big, scary-looking friends is

that you can say things like that to them without having to worry about getting thumped. It helps make up for a lot of playground traumas left over from childhood.)

"He said I was just as bad as Giuliani," Paul said. "That Giuliani had ruined New York and now I was doing the same thing to London."

Paul wasn't going to get too upset over that accusation. He's one of the few Irishmen I know who will openly admit to sympathy for the IRA, and he can't stand Bush or the war in Iraq, but he has a high opinion of Rudy Giuliani and what he's done in New York. For that matter, so do I.

I've been to New York three times in the past year, and every time it's been fabulous. The only downside was having to come back to London, which is still on the same self-abasing, hapless road to ruin that New York was staggering down a decade or two ago.

Many will disagree. One of the cheapest forms of entertainment I know is to mention Giuliani's name to a group of New Yorkers. They'll quickly divide into warring camps, each determined to tell you how the controversial mayor "saved" or "ruined" New York.

Among my punk rock friends there are more Giuliani bashers than fans, but even here there's a divide. The punks who hate Giuliani tend to be older, from somewhere else, and have a more privileged background. The punks who like him seem to be native New Yorkers (but from the boroughs, not Manhattan), younger and working class.

This makes sense to me. People who treat New York like an urban theme park are more concerned with whether they can drink beer on street corners or go to peep shows than whether some old granny in the Bronx can walk home safely from the subway station.

People who actually have an old granny in the Bronx and remember how a few years ago she couldn't walk to the corner store in broad daylight, well, they feel a bit more positive about New York now being the safest big city in America, where once it was one of the most dangerous in the world.

"It was never as bad as you make it out to be," some old-timers complain. "I lived on the Lower East Side all through the '80s and only got mugged once," they'll tell you.

What they're conveniently overlooking is that they were young, presumably healthy and strong, could run fast, and probably didn't have much worth stealing. So even if they did get mugged, it was probably only for a few bucks, and it would make for an amusing anecdote at the party or punk club they were headed to.

It's not the same for an elderly person who can't run or fight back, or for a working stiff who sees the week's pay he was going to use to feed his family taken away by a knife-wielding crackhead.

This attitude of "New York was so much cooler when it was more dangerous and edgy" seems to emanate mainly from arrogant, over-privileged brats who don't give a shit about anything or anyone apart from their own amusement. Of course there's the political angle, too. There's a whole crew of lefties and anarchists who will tell you that making the streets safe is somehow a plot against working people and people of color, as if working people and people of color naturally prefer to live in a dangerous shithole.

Take a look at who's pedaling this propaganda, though, and nine times out of IO it's white kids from the suburbs, who probably think that black people *like* to live in ghettoes, and that idiots dealing dope and running around shooting each other are an authentic expression of black culture.

They'll trot out the stories of Amadou Diallo, the West African immigrant who was shot to death by trigger-happy cops, or Abner Louima, the Haitian who was viciously assaulted by four police officers at a Brooklyn precinct, to "prove" that the entire Giuliani era was a concerted war against black people. But these events were aberrations, particularly shocking because they were so unusual. In the Louima case, other cops turned in their fellow officers and testified against them because they too were appalled.

What the race demagogues don't tell you are how many black lives Giuliani saved. How do I figure that? Simple. Since 1993, the murder rate in New York City has dropped from nearly 2,000 a year to just over 500. That makes several thousand people who are alive today who wouldn't be alive today if New York's "good old days" had continued.

If past trends held true, something like 60 percent of them would have been black. Under previous mayors, murders that happened in the ghetto were taken for granted and only half-heartedly investigated, if at all. Not so under Giuliani. He was the first mayor in decades, possibly ever, to insist that everybody, not just rich white people in Manhattan, was entitled to live in a safe, clean and humane environment.

Do I think Giuliani sometimes went over the top? Yeah, sure, though not with his zero tolerance approach to crime and assholeism. I'm not sure I understand why he had to clamp down so hard on dance clubs, for example. And as long as they're limited to certain neighborhoods and are discreet, I don't see what the problem is with porn theatres, either.

I also think Giuliani was wrong to make a big stink about the quality of the art being displayed in public museums. Yeah, it was crappy art, that's true, but it's always dangerous when the government gets involved in the art criticism business. On the other hand, he did have a point: people should be free to create whatever kind of art they want, but they don't have a right to expect the taxpayers to subsidize it.

But those are minor quibbles. I could come up with some major ones, too, but they'd be about other aspects of his administration, not policing and law and order. He could have done better with the schools, for example, and he did have a tendency toward megalomania that could have become a problem if he'd hung around for longer than the two terms allowed him by law.

First things first, though. When Giuliani took over, New York was widely considered to be ungovernable (remember the

film Escape From New York, based largely on that premise?). No society can function if its citizens can't feel safe and secure in their own homes and surroundings. New Yorkers had all but abandoned that as a hopeless, idealistic dream, but Giuliani made it happen, and in doing so gave the world's greatest city back its pride and self-respect.

Thanks to his policies, New York today is not just a safe place, it is a pleasant one. No longer constantly looking over their shoulders for fear of being assaulted or killed, New Yorkers can afford to relax and be civil to one another.

And it's hardly a police state, either. I see fewer cops in New York than I do in London. The difference is that in New York people have come to expect a certain standard of behavior from their fellow citizens, and most of the time, at least nowadays, they get it.

Not so in London, where nobody, least of all the cops, dares say anything to someone who's making life miserable for others. Might hurt their feelings, or damage their self-esteem, you know. And God help us if the miscreant happens to be a person of color, or an immigrant. Then the whole legacy of British colonialism and imperial guilt comes into play.

The sad thing is that I'm starting to get used to it, to take the graffiti and the broken glass and the litter and nobody bothering to pay on the subway for granted, just like New Yorkers used to do pre-Giuliani. I don't feel that threatened, even though crime is double that of New York, but I do find myself making adjustments that I shouldn't have to make, like not accepting invitations in certain parts of town, or not walking down some of my favorite streets after dark.

I'm becoming like New Yorkers of the '70s and '80s, thinking, "Hey, it's not that bad." Which is tragic, really, because cities, just like the people who live in them, should expect and demand the best of themselves. "Not that bad" is never good enough, and what I love about Giuliani is that he grabbed a whole city by the scruff of the neck and made it understand that.



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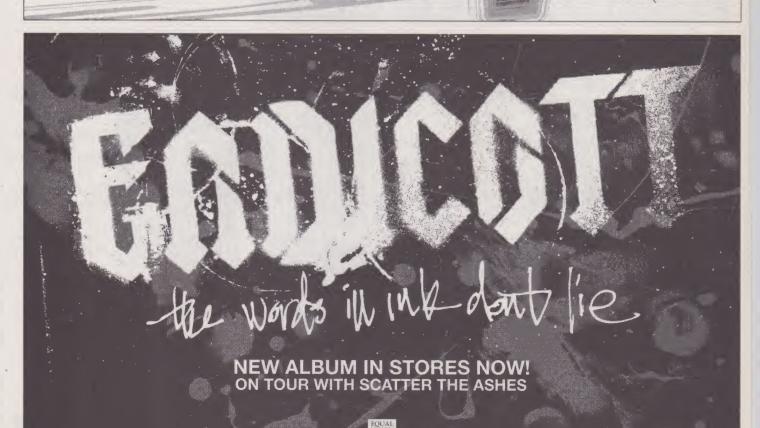
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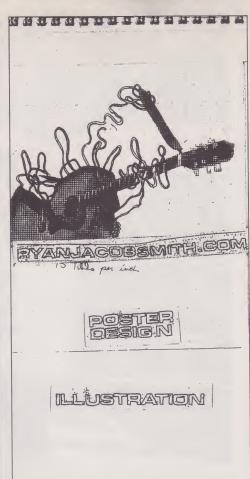
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W Newburt Conies

Black Tar Habit

by Emily Schambra

In the car, Simon blasts shitty punk rock and drums his fingers on the steering wheel. This used to make me smile but now I just turn away, scrutinize my face in the side mirror and stare blankly at the desert landscape. The rough, dry ground looks like it stretches on forever—like it covers the entire earth, but Simon told me that it ends somewhere, at the foot of some mountain where things begin to get greener. I imagine myself breaking out of the car at a light and just running. Running to the foot of that mountain, so I can see where life begins to grow.

"Slow down, Simon. If we get pulled over we're fucked, you know that." I gesture angrily at the odometer.

"I'm only going five over," he flicks cigarette ash on the floor of the car. I sigh, disgusted. He's going nine over.

As a child I hated needles. Every year around my birthday my mother would take me to see Dr. Golding for a check-up.

"Do I have to get a shot?" I would ask

him. My stomach would be in knots, my palms sweaty. I hated the way the room made my feet cold and my skin look purple. I felt miles from the ground on the examining table.

"Let's see here . . ." Dr. Golding would fumble through my charts. Every year, this same phrase, this familiar panic. Please God, no shots this year. Next year I can handle it, then I'll be 11.

"Look's like you're not up to date on your tetanus. So we'll do that for you today, how 'bout?" The terror of these words is unparalleled.

"I hate you." I would tell him.

"It won't be so bad," he would smile.
"Be brave for me."

I let them win. I became more ready for them, I beckoned them, craved what they flushed into my system.

"Do you have the money?" Simon asks me. His eyes are wild and he keeps shifting positions in the seat.

"Well do you, or what? I mean we don't have any clean—"

"Simon, I have it. Watch the fucking road."

Strips malls close in on either side of the car. I vaguely feel like they are the center of the universe. Every one, always the same. You could get lost in them, the miles and miles of asphalt. Labrinyths of driveways that lead only to dead ends. Illusions of escape that turn out only to be perfectly symmetrical patches of grass. Nail boutique, fried chicken joint, corporate bookstore and coffee shop, discount outlet, electronics store, video store. Repeat. These are the places created to drive us insane. And here, in Arizona, the concrete is surrounded by desert. Survival is impossible here, I think.

Simon waits outside for me while I go in to buy us fresh needles. He makes me buy them because the pharmacist caught on to him, refused to sell him a pack one night, called him a dope fiend. When I open the door to get out, Simon tells me to smile and not to look so nervous. We've even rehearsed what I'm going to say if the pharmacist asks for my diabetic ID card.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Keep those submissions rolling in—and please adhere to the following guidelines: keep your work around 1,600 words or less; write your name and e-mail address on the story itself; and send files in RTF or DOC format to ppfiction@yahoo.com.

"Well, um, you see. I don't have it. It's at home. I didn't expect to need them so soon so I didn't bring my card when I went out this morning. I'm feeling a little faint and need a shot right now. Please sir, I need them or I'll die."

"Do whatever you have to do," Simon tells me.

My boots make a slight squeak on the linoleum floor. I approach the pharmacy window and have to wait a minute before I'm noticed. A clean-cut middle-aged man wearing thick glasses and a white coat asks if he can help me. I clear my throat and tell myself to act natural.

"I need a pack of IO cc needles." The pharmacist looks at me like he recognizes me. Knows what I'm up to. Knows I'm not a diabetic.

"Four dollars." He scans them and hands them to me in a brown paper bag.

I call my mother collect from a gas station payphone on Christmas day. The operator's voice tells me my call is accepted.

"Hello?" My mother sounds strained, this hello is more like an exasperated sigh.

"Hey, Mom," I do my best to sound cheerful. "Merry Christmas." This sounds like a question, I feel like I'm asking her if this is OK.

"Yeah. You too." There are loud

voices in the background. It's probably around the time when, as during most of our family gatherings, my grandpa starts to get drunk and yell at my uncles.

"Bill, its Angela." My mother says to my father, who must be nearby. I imagine him, in his red wool Christmas sweater, cowering behind my mother, afraid of his in-laws.

"The whole family's here," she says.
"They're all wondering where you are and
I just don't know what to tell them." This
is a trick; my mother's always tricking me.

"And don't ask me to send you any more money. I won't do it. I don't know what you're doing down there. What are you doing, Ang?"

Silence.

"How's Dad?" I switch the subject.

"He's OK Work has been giving his

"He's OK. Work has been giving him some trouble. He's not getting as much money these days. That's why we can't afford to keep wiring it to you every month."

"Mom, that's not why I called." A maroon Cadillac pulls up to one of the pumps. An older, heavyset lady with brown hair, maybe mid-50s, gets out of the car and fumbles with her gas cap. She's talking to herself, I think I hear her curse.

"Would you like to speak with him?" I

tell her yes. I hear my mother cover up the phone and then I hear my father's voice, muffled. My mother returns and tells me my father is busy. He doesn't want to talk to me, I think, and light a cigarette.

Simon honks the horn indicating his impatience. The lady in the Cadillac yells something at him and slams her car door. It's a holiday and the pharmacy's closing early.

There's a church across the street. A nativity scene is set up on the front lawn. Life-sized plastic sheep, wise men, a Mary and Joseph. They all hover around a plastic crib. A floodlight from the roof of the church illuminates them. I can't see the baby Jesus from this far away. I wonder if there's actually one in there, or if we're just supposed to assume.

I tell my mother I have to go. When I tell her I love her again, there's more silence.

"Come home soon Angela." She says and hangs up.

Emily is a fiction writing student at Columbia College Chicago. In her spare time she rocks with her band, Long Distance Runner, and studies pop culture by watching television. She can be reached at emilyschambra@yahoo.com



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How to Start a Crafty Business

By Sue Blatt and Kathleen Habbley

uring the Spring of 2003, when we were looking for places to sell our handmade jewelry and sewn items, we couldn't find anywhere that catered to the already-established DIY craft movement in Chicago. I mean, who wants to go to Walgreens and get slides made, or pay a \$200 entry fee when you're not even sure you're gonna break even? We knew there was a void to be filled, so we researched how to start a craft fair. It seemed like fun, so we decided to give it a try and started the Renegade Craft Fair. Little did we know we were about to get a crash course in Business IOI. It's not very hard if you love what you do, and we want to encourage people who are thinking about starting their own business to do it. So here's what we learned:

Starting Out

Coming up with a unique idea is probably the hardest part about starting your own DIY business. You have to provide something that nobody else can and it needs to be something you enjoy. Research what you're getting yourself into. Make sure you know what your start-up costs, monthly expenses, and potential profits are going to be and find out who your competition is. Next, settle on a name and make sure no one else is using it.

In DIY businesses, there might be a tendency to work backwards. That is, you might want to wait and see if your business succeeds before you spend time and money on cutting through all the red tape. It's a good idea, though, to keep track of your expenses so that you can deduct them later.

It's kind of a drag, but one of the most important things to establish your business is to make it legit with the man. You will need to register your business name, figure out what type of business you will have (sole-proprietorship, partnership, etc), obtain the proper business licenses, and pay taxes, too. This might all seem overwhelming, but if you have the right resources it's not hard at all and only somewhat timeconsuming. More information can be found online at www.sba.gov.

Bookkeeping

The chances of receiving a loan from a bank are slim to none if you're a young DIY entrepreneur with limited resources. The best way to fund your venture is by saving your own money or asking for a loan from family and friends. You'll need to calculate your start-up costs to do so. Here's a list of expenses to possibly consider, depending on what your product is: raw materials, inventory, office supplies, shipping supplies, computer and Internet service, displays, promotional materials, licenses, advertisements, packaging materials, and rent and utilities. If you work from home, you can deduct part of your rent and utilities from your taxes by calculating the square footage/percentage of what you use.

We recommend that you open a separate bank account from your personal one because it's much easier to keep everything organized and you can then have payments made out to your business name as well. Finally, it's probably wise to hire an accountant around tax time just because you can save yourself a lot of confu-

sion and time trying to fill out the forms yourself. Keeping a ledger makes it easier for you and your accountant to file taxes.

Getting your name out

Once your paperwork is all in order and you're ready to launch your business, here are some options to get your name out there:

Consignment. Consigning is a good way to get your feet wet and to try to see if your stuff sells. Scope out your neighborhood and find stores that are willing to sell handmade wares. Make an appointment with the consignor and work out a deal. Most consignors keep 40–50 percent of the profit if your item sells, but you can think of it as a marketing tool and learning experience.

There are also several online consignment shops which could provide you with even more potential buyers. Some good ones are www.cutxpaste.com and www.morningcraft.com.

Websites. Establishing and maintaining an online shop is inexpensive and there's barely any overhead. It's under \$100 to get it running and roughly \$15/month. Once you register a domain name, all you need is a digital camera, a graphics program, and a general understanding of HTML—or a friend who is web savvy. Several companies offer free shopping cart services, and payments are easy to collect through PayPal or money orders.

Having a mailing list is a good way to encourage repeat customers. Record e-mail addresses and send out notices when you update your inventory and draw customers to back to your site.

There are also a lot of online resources and communities where you can network with other businesses and promote yourself. Places like <code>ibuydiy.com</code> and <code>BUST</code> magazine's online directory, the <code>Girl</code> <code>Wide Web</code>, allow you to post your link. Other small businesses will also offer link exchanges and promo swaps. This helps newcomers who are able to tap into the online craft community.

Art + Craft Fairs. Another important way to reach the public is by participating in art and craft fairs. The recent DIY explosion has expanded into the festival setting. There are a bunch of edgy craft fairs all over the country that are low maintenance and inexpensive to join including the Renegade Craft Fair (Chicago, IL), I heart rummage (Seattle, WA), Bazaar Bizarre (Boston / Cleveland/LA), Punk Rock Flea Market (Boston), and Art vs. Craft (Milwaukee, WI).

Marketing. Make sure you set aside a wad of cash for advertising and such. This will take a huge chunk out of your budget. Find your favorite indie + local publications and check out their advertising rates. Send them a press release, and this way you can reach your target market. Maybe they'll even write an article on you!

Other Crafty Biz Resources: Craftster.com / Getcrafty.com / Supernaturale.com / Theswitchboards.com / Small Time Operator by Bernard B. Kamoroff, CPA. Good luck!

SeX EARLY TO BED by sex lady searah

Other people's problems.

Ever since I started this column (and even before that) I have been compulsive about reading other people's sex advice, especially in mainstream magazines. I am particularly fond of advice columns in men's magazines, as they tend to be a little dirtier then the columns in women's magazines (if they even have them). Sometimes they are penned by women and often the answers are either unintelligible or downright misogynistic, which is particularly appalling when coming from a woman. In particular, I am always watching the sex columnist from Esquire magazine. She drives me nuts because she seems to either dismiss questions by using up all her space making not-actually-witty remarks or else she gives half-assed answers that only kind of answer the question. And yes, occasionally she'll have a right-on response and then I really hate her (I love to hate). Here are a couple of recent questions that I thought she got particularly wrong, along with my answers that I hope are at least a little more helpful.

"I am a very passionate man who loves foreplay, oral sex, and makes sure my woman is satisfied before I am, but my wife's libido is non-existent. All my friends tell me I am what a woman dreams of! What is going on here?"

While a man who likes performing oral sex and foreplay is a welcome change for many women, that alone does not a great lover make, stud. Women's libido and their relationship to their sexuality can be more complicated than you are making it out to be. Of course the first thing you should do is talk to your wife and ask her what is going on. Maybe she is raising your kids, washing your shirts, cooking your food, and is just too damn tired for sex. Maybe she has a hormonal imbalance that is affecting her libido (in which case, she should talk to her doctor) or maybe she feels too much pressure to be "satisfied" and can't enjoy the sex.

One of the greatest things to happen to our sexual culture in the past 30 or so years is the realization that woman have the right to have orgasms too. And now many (maybe even most) men are very interested in satisfying their female partners, which is a relatively new and fabulous phenomenon. But what has also happened is that we have let our very goal-oriented culture slip into the bedroom. Just because a woman can have orgasms, it doesn't mean that you should treat that like a chore you have to accom-

plish before you get to the "real" sex (i.e. your penis in her vagina). While I applaud you for being mature enough to realize that most women like a little more than having a dick slammed into them, you have to realize that one way to kill a mood or make sex seem like a chore is to always put goals on it. Sure, most people like to end sex with a big, fat orgasm, but lots of people-and especially many women-prefer the sex to be less about the orgasms and more about the connection between two people and/or the all around good physical sensations that being naked with someone can cause. One thing I have been working on in my own life is seeing sex less as a mission to accomplish and more of an experience to be enjoyed. Sometimes we get so caught up in trying to make our partners come that we stop paying attention to what their bodies are telling us. It is a nice thing to want your partner to be satisfied, but for some people an orgasm doesn't necessarily equal satisfaction.

Here is what I think you should try next time you are getting busy with your lady: Forget about her orgasm and forget about your orgasm. Concentrate on listening to her body and try following her where she wants to go, not where you think a "good lover" would take it. Maybe neither one of you will have orgasms, but sometimes that needs to not be the point. Try making out on the couch with all your clothes on. Get some edible body paints and just have a fun painting/touching/licking session. Don't think of it as "foreplay," think of every sensual touch as sex and try to be in that very moment, not thinking about how her getting off or about how after she gets off you'll get to too. I know this maybe sounds cheesy or difficult (reading someone else's body language can be a challenge) but I know from my experience that even the best sexual intentions can miss the mark of what your partner actually needs or wants. I can't say for sure if it is your approach that is making your wife seem disinterested in sex, but just remember that communication is one of the most important parts of a healthy sex life that and any time things seem weird or off with you partner you should talk to them It may not be easy, but no advice columnist knows what the hell is going on in someone else's head.

(The gist of *Esquire*'s sex lady's answer was "Some women just don't like sex." And while I am sure that is true, it hardly answers this guy's question.)

"In my youth, masturbating used to be really pleasurable. Now that I am older, taking matters into my own hands isn't quite as rewarding. Have I changed? And how can I get back to good masturbation?"

I like the term "good masturbation." People don't usually talk about masturbation as being good—usually it is either talked about as being evil, sad, or just necessary. We don't usually admit to it being a fun, enjoyable practice that can be more than just some frantic stroking under the covers after the lights are out. We don't celebrate it for what it is, the simple and natural enjoyment our bodies and our fabulous sexuality (god, I sound like a hippie).

But to answer your question, sure, you could have changed. Our sexuality certainly changes with us as we grow up (and old). If you have a lot of sex with another person and you are satisfied that way, your hand, which seemed exciting when you were young, can seem like a pale substitute. Perhaps you masturbate too often and are just plain bored. Maybe you need to update your usual masturbatory fantasy. Or maybe you need to try something totally new. Ever done it in front of someone else (someone who wants to see it—don't start masturbating in front of people you don't know want to see it!)

Here are some other ways to spice up your solo action, whether you are a guy or gal:

Lube

OK, so maybe lube isn't the most radical addition to solo action, but lass or lad, it can certainly make it a lot more fun. If you are a chick, lube can add that extra slipperiness that can make stroking your cunt so much more fun. Stick with water-based lubes and look for ones that are designed to be gentle on your girlie parts. Guys, ditch the hand lotion and grab one of the fun oilbased (or silicone) lubes made just for boys. They stay slippery forever and even come in formulas that heat up.

Porn/Erotica

If you have never tried it, now is the time. There are endless options out there for smut. Everything from well-written, smart erotica to nasty, dirty DVDs that you can play on your computer in the privacy of your own room. If you aren't drawn to traditional porn, look a little harder or consult your local cool sex shop for fresh ideas. You can find movies made by women, movies all about tickling, anal massage videos, lesbian oil wrestling films. I know not everyone is

turned on by watching or reading porn, but ya'll should at least know that there is an amazing amount of variety out there and I believe there is something for (almost) everyone.

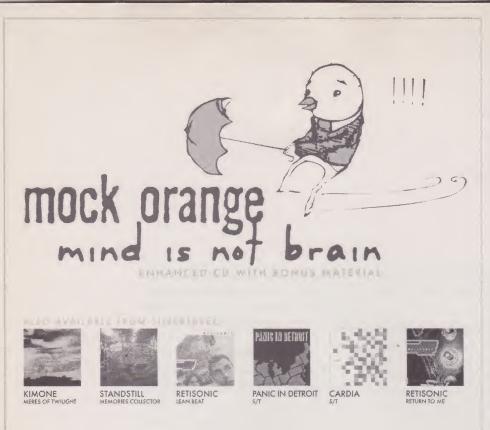
Toys

If you ask me, the best thing to happen to jacking/jilling off is the incredible range of sex toys out there. For gals, you have dildos, vibrators, butt plugs and more. If you have used your hand to get off all your life, you'll be in for a real treat if you kick it up a bit with a vibe. Guys, you are known for sticking your dicks in all kinds of places and there is a wealth of things out there designed just for that. Stretchy jelly sleeves, fake pussies and butts, cock-hugging vibrators, butt plugs and prostate stimulators are all ways to add a new dimension to your private time.

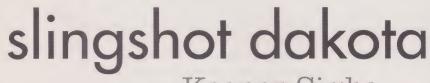
Experimenting with household objects is something many people tried as kids and can be fun as an adult, but please use caution. There are lots of things that are around our house that aren't safe on our cocks and pussies (mangos, milk/coke bottles, most things with an electrical cord). To be safe, get a toy that is made especially to bring your genitals pleasure. There are tons of places online and in many big cities where helpful, friendly sex educators can help you find a sexy toy. And whatever you do, avoid the temptation to try that auto-erotic asphyxiation thing. That can kill you, and no orgasm is worth that.

(While the advice columnist who answered this question wasn't really wrong, I thought she was incomplete in her answer. I'm very picky)

Send questions directly to me at sexlady@early2bed.com.







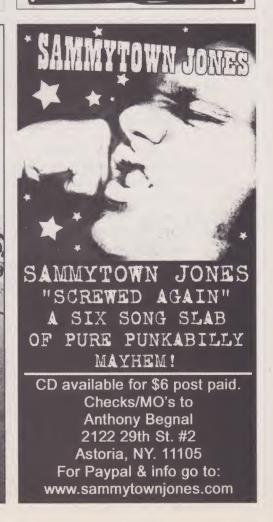
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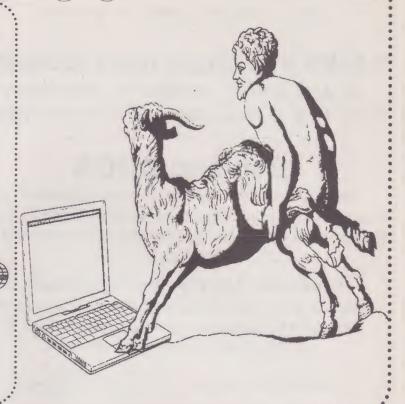
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THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Amy Adoyzie (AA), Dan Agacki (DA), Eric Action (EA), Abbie Amadio (AJA), Bill Angelbeck (BA), Jay Castaldi (JC), Vincent Chung (VC), Carla Costa (CC), Art Ettinger (AE), Melissa Geils (MG), Julie Gerstein (JG), Jason Gooder (JJG), Emily Hausman (EH), Dave Hofer (DH), Don Irwin (DI), Ari Joffe (AJ), Scott Jones (SJ), Tim Kuehl (TK), Dan Laidman (DAL), Ryan Leach (RL), Todd Martens (TM), Krystle Miller (KM), Sean Moeller (SM), (Mr.) Dana Morse (DM), Brian Moss (BM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Rex Reason (RR), Kyle Ryan (KR), Neal Shah (NS), Lisa Weingarth (LW)

Edited by Kyle Ryan (KR)

A Soft Perversion - Last Hoorah!, 7"

Self-released debut 7-inch from this indie pop group channeling some '80s new wave elements. Originally from Florida, but now based in Northampton, Mass., this is a five-piece of jangly guitars, synth, bass and drums. There's room for more originality, but these songs reveal some promise. (BA) Self-released, www.asoftperversion.com

Abattoir 3000 - Road Trip To Oblivion, CD

Based on a book and maybe a movie, this CD sounds like the Butthole Surfers or a Queen/David Bowie opera. The lyrics are about the end of the world and other political rants. The music isn't bad, and I'm normally a fan of conceptual albums, but this one was lacking. (DI)

Kommy Electra Productions, www.roadtriptooblivlan.com

Abduktio – Perustuu Tositapahtumiin, CD

This is the most vocally chaotic band I've ever heard. Even if they were singing in English, I would have no clue what was going on. They play fast, melodic hardcore/post-hardcore with heavily political lyrics nicely translated from Finnish in their lyric sheet. Fairly original and worth a listen. (TK) Fullsteam Records, PO Box 206, 00101 Helsinki, Finland, www.fullsteamrecords.com

Active Sac - Salt And Shovels, 7"

This could have quite easily come out 10 years ago, when bands like Big Drill Car and Samiam were crafting quirky, plaintive, poppy melodic punk rock. It's heartening to hear this kind of punk played this well in 2004. Four songs on gray marbled vinyl. (RR)

Gothic Anus Records, 806 Johann Dr., Westminster, MD 21158, mboesler@musician.org; Wallride Records, 4401 Ethel Ave., Hampstead, MD 21074, wallridekid@aol.com

Ad Aspera Per Aspera - Cubic Zirconia, CDEP

This band projects a Radiohead-like complexity. Vocals compete with patches of crunchy guitars and range from calming to screaming (I preferred the latter). Within their wall of sound, there is the clarity of a piano psychedelically communicating some code. This EP is an omen of good things to come. (BA) Big Brown Shark, 300 North Brighton Ave., Kansas Clty, MO 64123, jbettert@midlandis.com

Age Of Ruin – The Tides Of Tragedy, CD

MY HEART BLEEDS SHRAPNEL, OF FIRE (jugga jug jug jugga) ALL THESE TOMORROWS ARE BURIED IN THE YESTERDAYS OF TODAYS (jug jug weedley wee) falling leaves, deceased like my pet turtle, HIS NAME WAS SORROW! (deedley dee dee der dee) WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME, A MERE SHELL OF A MAN, A TURTLE MAAAANNNNN!!! (mosh, braap, rawr) (NS)

Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 24913, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.eulogyrecordings.com

Alabama Thunderpussy – Fulton Hill, CD

Country-tinged sludge-rock stoner/groove metal. There aren't too many more descriptors you can throw at a band, but they all fit in this case—and

ATP makes them fit *together*, rather than sounding like a schizophrenic mix tape or audio shit stew. (RR)

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

Alec K. Redfearn & The Eyesores - Every Man For Himself & God Against All. CD

Well this was an extremely interesting CD. The lead instrument is an accordion accompanied by woodwinds, traditional rock instruments and other assorted strangeness. The accordion mixed with Alec's voice give a little bit of a They Might Be Giants feel, but the Eyesores have a much darker musical vision. Some songs have an almost klesmer feel, while "Cold Little Knife" gives a taste of Irish music. Still other songs are very intricate compositions, and some are slower, enveloped by Alec's droning accordion. The CD ends with some avant-garde music that would fit right in on Sonic Youth's *Goodbye 20th Century*. I'm definitely going to add this to my collection. (ST)

Corleone Records, PO Box 65, Providence, RI 02901, www.corleonerecords.com

Alexisonfire - Watch Out!, CD

Melodic hardcore/metal crossover junk, which appears to be the hot new sound. You've got the screaming with the singing, the brutal metal riffage with the pretty melodies...y'know, all the stuff that makes heavy music cute and appealing for the teenage girl masses. Blech. (MG)

Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

All Green Lights - Candida Pax, CD

All Green Lights is lovely ambient electronic music, in the vein of a vocalless Lali Puna or even Her Space Holiday. This is some really beautiful stuff, perfect to fall asleep to. (JG)

Morninglight Records, PO Box 202, College Park, MD 20742, www.morninglightrecords.com

Almighty Trigger Happy, The - I Hate Us Even More, CD

Horrible. At times, The Almighty Trigger Happy reminds me of a really shitty version of Lifetime. Grating vocals with an insistent, monotonous drum beat; this is a no qo, kids. (RL)

Bad Taste Records, PO Box 1243, 221 05 Lund, Sweden, www.badtasterecords.se

Amazing Transparent Man - Print Is Dead, CD

Amazing Transparent Man is an ultra-catchy pop-punk band from the Chicago are who gets better and better with each release. This album, their third full-length, is highlighted by cover art parodying a common paperback edition of *The Catcher In The Rye*, varied song tempos and exceptionally catchy lyrics. The opening track, "International Gamers Committee (IGC)," about the politically charged life of a gamer, is pure pop-punk genius. Another song contains the unforgettable lyrics "God is love/ love is dumb/ I am dumb/ so I am God." Like many of the other great pop

albums of the past several years, this was recorded at Sonic Iguana, so the production manages to be clean without sounding overly glossy. (AE)

Double Zero Records, PO Box 7122, Algonquin, IL 60102, www.doublezerorecords.com

Amber Pacific - Fading Days, CDEP

How teenagers get their debut EP put out by a big label and instantly play major stages on Warped dates is beyond me, but if all of today's emo-pop was this powerful, we'd all be big emo fans. Cheesy as hell, Amber Pacific's hook-driven, mopey madness is nonetheless loveable. (AE)

Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409, www.hopelessrecords.com

An Albatross - CD Extra, CD

I continue to stick by my word concerning this band: They do the screamobut-not-really thing better than most, adding a nice pinch of grindcore, a dab of creepy carnival music and sampling, and a dash of super danceable r'n'r licks. Definitely a poor man's Locust (that's a good thing). (MG) Bloodlink, 4434 Ludlow St., Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.bloodlink.com

An Arrow In Flight – Filling The Sky, CD

A nice mix of older East Bay and DC emo. Spoken words turn to passionate screaming and intricate guitars transpose into dueling chord progressions. Comes in a nice handmade jacket with song explanations and all that good stuff. (NS)

Coldbringer, PO Box 65144, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.coldbringerrecordings.com

Anal Beard - Din Noir, CD

If you've ever wished that They Might Be Giants were punkier, a little more juvenile and a lot more British, your wish has been granted in the form of

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 2927, Brighton, Sussex, BN1 3SX, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Anchorite Four, The – Remove The Chassis, CD

For the most part, The Anchorite Four is a sterile, scream n' whimper band. Their saving grace is the occasional, jagged rhythmical transitions and discordant guitar spasms. The foundation of their sound comes a dime a dozen these days, but if their creative habits grow, they might step into their own. (BM) Broken Line Records, 211 N. Fifth St., Columbus, OH 43215, www.brokenlinerecords.com

9 Ankles, The - Kill Themselves, CD

It's not easy being from the great state of New Jersey these days, and well, it never was. But with bands especially, the letters NJ can sometimes unjustly (or justly) lump you together with such hideous musical output such as "screamo" and My Chemical Romance. While it might be hard sharing a state with so many people with scraped knees from jumping on so many bandwagons, it's nice to see such a fresh-sounding record from the easiest state to hate on. Combining the lo-fi fuzz and whine of Pavement and the



straight-forward pomp-rock crunch of Error Type:11 and Pilot To Gunner, Kill Themselves is a solid effort from a band who sounds as if they might just be able to bring some pride back to their stomping grounds. (MS)

Maggadee Records, PO Box 666 Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.maggadee.com

Anodyne - Lifetime Of Gray Skies, CD

Anoydyne plays hardcore that isn't necessarily new, but done well. They give you metal, some grind and a little sludgy Southern rock, incorporating spacy musical stops to break up the noise. With great drumming, it's an overall solid effort. For hardcore fans, it wouldn't be a bad purchase. (EH) Level Plane Records, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

Answer, The - You Had Your Chance, CD

I had been wanting to hear this for a while. It didn't blow me away, but it's good—modern straight-edge hardcore that gets inside your head. The songs are well-written, with plenty of breakdowns. But there really isn't anything to distinguish this from the pack. (DA)

Excursion Records, PO Box 20224, Seattle, WA 98102, www.excursionrecords.com

Arm, The - S/T, CDEP

That dancey, posty, talky thing the kids like is all up in this. The vocal delivery is very Mark E. Smith (the band's similarities with The Fall are even mentioned in song) while the bass drives, the guitar chimes and clangs, the organ colors, and the drums slip and slide. (RR) last Gasp Records, 413 W. Crestland, Austin, TX 78752

Army Of Freshmen – Beg, Borrow, Steal, CD

This is the first Reggie And The Full Effect cover band with the assistance of the All American Rejects guy on vocals. OK, I'm kidding, but this is infectiously catchy pop magic that my roommate wants when I'm done. Not bad at all once you get past the sugar coating. (DM)

33rd St. Records, www.33rdstreet.com

Arsons, The - Bridges Down, CD

A bland collection of Texas Is The Reason/Hot Water Music-derived indie rock. Musically, *Bridges Down* contains everything from 7 Seconds drumbeats to cheesy '70s hard-rock solos. Lyrically, the band continues the per-

petual downward spiral of introspective lyrics, leaving Roger Miller and Clint Conley (Mission Of Burma) asking "Why?" (RL)

Mad At The World Records, PO Box 20227, Thompkins Square Station, New York, NY 10009, www.matwrecords.com

Artichoke Project, The - Stimoceiver, CD

Creative, complex and quirky pop. Smooth bass, talented guitars that switch from soft to jazzy to bluesy, a little Hammond organ, some sampling and a vocalist who reminds me of They Might Be Giants. If I had better taste, I'd probably love this. So I guess you should all love this. (NS)

Trolley Stop, 2217 E. Wright St., Tacoma, WA 98404, www.trolleystoprecords.com

At Dusk - Heights, CD

Citing such influences as Mission Of Burma and Sonic Youth, At Dusk is trying very hard, but this album is an atonal mess. Devoid of the artfulness and noisy elegance of their influences, At Dusk's songs seem to want melody to enter into them, but they just keep pushing it away. (AJA) Self-released, www.atduskmusic.com

Athens Boys Choir - Rhapsody in T, CD

Spoken-word poets Katz and Rocket perform thought-provoking and political rhythmic rants. Born females sexually, these are "gender fuckin' dudes" though, as Rocket puts it, "I can't just call up my mom, tell her I'm Dick not Jane." In "Queers from Kentucky," they describe being homosexual in the South: "I'd be lying if I said I wasn't a little bit scared, and I'd be lying if I said I didn't care which side of the Mason-Dixon I was fixed in...walking gender like a thin line...I change pronouns as I cross state lines...day after day, year after year, going through life as a gender queer, looking for answers on the road and in beer, 'cause I'm not finding anything inside me but fear." In other parts, this duo tackle radsm, the Defense of Marriage Act, and Bush, who helped drive them toward activist poetry: "I gave my heart to my country like an organ donor, gave taxes and votes, but for equal rights, I found closed doors. Uncle Sam picks my pockets to send rockets to foreign lands, promises down like rain, bringin' hopes of upward growth 'till it goes down the drain." Worth checking out. (BA)

Daemon Records, PO Box 1207, Decatur, GA 30031, www.daemonrecords.com

Atomic 7 - ...En Hillbilly Caliente, CD

Instrumental rockabilly-swing-surf-rock. Awesome guitar licks abound! Should really appeal to listeners who actually play the six-string and can fully appreciate Brian Connelly's smooth, textured twang. (AJ) Mint Records Inc., PO Box 3613, Vancouver, BC V6B 376, Canada, www.mintrecs.com

9 Atomsmasher - All Around The World, CD

An auspicious start in rock 'n' roll doesn't typically come from landing a song on a WB sitcom like—if anybody's seen it—*Nick Freno, Licensed Teacher.* But most members of bands will say that, at the end of the day, if you have good songs, things will always be right. Sometimes that's true, and sometimes it's not. Atomsmasher plays power-pop songs that, if using the above method for determination, things are right most of the time despite a fairly vanilla sound that is college-bar friendly, only without the covers. (SM) Self-released, 1333a North Avenue #236, New Rochelle, NY 10804; www.atomsmasher.com

Awesome Animal Ambulance – "This Is Sour" – Lemon Peel, CD

Ultra-cutesy little-girl vocals over minimalistic electronic keyboards. Clocking in at less than 20 minutes, "*This Is Sour*" is full of simple little tunes in the vein of the Crabs, Cub or Crayon—exactly what you might expect from a band with a name like Awesome Animal Ambulance. No angst here. (JG) Aurora Seven Records, PO Box 890004, Weymouth, MA 02189, www.auroraseven.com

Bad Cassettes, The - No One To Have Sex With, 7"

Every so often, a release pops up and refuses to be lumped into any existing genre. That's the case with this Bad Cassettes' 7", which bravely straddles that thin line between experimental and just plain weird, putting forth an edectic concoction of rock, pop, jazz and even dance. (BN)

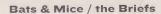
Below Recordings, Greifswaiderstrasse 9, 10405 Berlin, Germany, www.belowrecords.com

Bad Wizard - #1 Tonight!, CD

Boogie rock with a diamond-hard edge—you either stopped reading or just got stoked. If you always thought Black Oak Arkansas needed more MC5 or vice versa, you're in luck. The best of '70s hard rock is here without the lameness of The Darkness. (RR)

Howler Records, 31 Union Square West, Suite 9A, New York, NY 10003, www.howler-records.com

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Bats & Mice - Even And Then Some / Around What's Done, 7"

Post-punk that is pretty, pristine and clean. This EP is melodic and mellow, but energetic and organic. With great vocals, clean, melodic guitar and solid, simplistic drums, it sounds like a mix between Pinback and Sunny Day Real Estate, Overall, really solid, (EH)

Nashardaa Records, c/o Springer Wollbergsredder 9, 24113 Molfsee, Germany, www.narshardaa.com

Being Human Being - S/T, CDEP

Thoughtfully assembled midtempo rock that ends up being rather blah. Missing what so many bands seem to be lacking: that extra something that makes a good song spectacular, memorable or inspiring. Nevertheless, there is an earnest effort made here—maybe next time around. (AJA) Said Sew Recordings, 10 Harvest Lane, Farmington, CT 06032, www.saidsew.com

9 Belles, The - Idle Acres, CDEP

After their first full-length, Omerta, was released in 2002, this Lawrence, Kan., band rode high on a wave of indie-pop bliss, reaping rave reviews from the critics and propelling into a European tour and a deal with a small British label. The Belles became known for their catchy, quiet sound similar to Grandaddy. But the most recent release from the dream-pop purveyor almost misses the mark. The first two tracks of this seven-song album are impressive pieces packed with glorious spacey swells and sparkling melodies that build on the band's previous endeavors. But as it wears on, the sound becomes increasingly sluggish, dropping to the lowest point at a lo-fi cover of Neil Young's "Birds." Hopefully The Belles will get their sound back on track for the next full-length. (LW) Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 413084, Kansas City, MO 64141-3084, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Benny - All Things Come To And End, CDEP

Totally uninspired pop punk = Benny. This was recorded in a slick studio, and it sounds as clean as a recording can be. (EA) Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

P Black Helicopter- That Specific Function, CD

With the sudden influx of concept albums, it's hard not to become a little wary of such indulgent musical inspiration. Black Helicopter seem to acknowledge this by not only creating a truly unique story line: All lyrics are actually drunken excerpts overheard by the band. Not only does That Specific Function manage to incorporate an interesting lyrical narrative, but the packaging for this sucker is fantastic. It's a pop-book, for Pete's sake! Unfortunately, the band's musical ambitions aren't nearly as impressive as their lyrical/graphical design skills, which is a real pity for a record that had all the makings of a cohesive album. Worth checking out for its sheer ambition. (MS) Traktor7 Records, 1100 Cambridge Street Cambridge MA 02139, www.traktor7.com

Blackout Beach – Light Flows The Putrid Dawn, CD

Blackout Beach is a side-project from Frog Eye's lead man, Carey Mercer.

They recently spent a tour as Destroyer's backing band and opener. In a way, this solo outing verges into softer, experimental territories and limbs of song structures beyond even that of his main group. I'll let the song titles suggest its atmospheres: "The Painted Forest Screen Hides Its Witch"; "The Reticent Burglar's Den"; "The Swineherd Sings And The Fountain Dwellers Grow Apart"; "The Hobo Who Learned To Eat Stone." These loose yet coherent pieces have the surrealism of a mental asylum and the hallucinatory feel of a circus. Guitars are picked and the vocals crack through the haze of a ill-tuned AM station. Piano keys and cymbals seem to randomly sound as if on a ship long lost on the high seas. He is following terrain cleared by Tom Waits and Giant Sand, though much more lo-fi in its folk instrumentation and production. This material easily could veer into silliness, but instead a seriousness maintains within these dark-edged tracks. Mercer has created another really strong work that deserves a listen by anyone willing to entertain such strange guests in their speakers. (BA)

SoftAbuse, 346 Lafayette Ave., #2, Brooklyn NY 11238, www.softabuse.com

Blinding Light, The - The Ascension Attempt, CD

Easily the thickest sounding record that I've heard in months, this totally kills-metallic hardcore done right for once. As a whole, the record is completely overwhelming. Blasts here, breakdowns there, screamed vocals, and a fluidity that is sorely lacking from most bands. These guys are serious. (DH) Deathwish, 315 Congress St., Ste. 336, Salem, MA 01970-5567, www.deathwishinc.com

Blood For Blood - Serenity, CDEP

One of hXc's toughest bands is back with a new EP that turns a mic check into lyrics ("Check! Check! One, two!") and rewrote lyrics from Madonna's "Like a Prayer" ("Did you call my name?/ And we did not hear/ care!) and did a cover of "Runaway." How cool is that? (DM)

Thorp Records, PO Box 6786 Toledo, OH 43612, www.thorprecords.com

Blue Rose Liar - Sycamore, CD

I was really surprised by this Massachusetts band. The simplicity of the tree-of-life cover artwork was lost on me at first glance. The CD has a lot of early '90s twin quitar attack, with growling vocals that are a step above the standard screamo/emo bands of present. (DI)

Self-released www.blueroseliar.com

Blueprint Seventy Six - Better Late Then Never, CD

This sounds like all those MTV pop-punk bands except these guys have some guy singing with gasoline vocals singing back-up and the riffs aren't as catchy. (KM)

Broken Spoke Records, 19983 Lexington, Redford, MI 48240, www.brokenspokerecords.com

Bombshells, The - S/T, CD

The Bombshells dish out heavy helpings of late-'70s punk rock. Unlike many contemporaries, they aren't mixing in any new wave, pop punk or garage; they're just giving you straight-ahead, traditional British punk rock.

Worth checking out for those who have worn out their Sex Pistols, Damned and Ramones records. (EA)

Self-released, PO Box 3361, Burbank, CA 91508-3361, www.thebombshellswebsite.com

Bon Mots, The – Le Main Drag, CD

Unremarkable indie rock out of Chicago. The Bon Mots are just another good-enough rock 'n' roll band with decent vocals and catchy enough tunes. Perhaps they'd be more exciting if they worked up a livestock and lighter fluid-fueled live show? Just a suggestion. (JG)

Mellifluid Records / self-released, www.thebonmots.com

Boneless Children Foundation, The - S/T, CDEP

The fastest art rock band I've ever heard, San Francisco's Boneless Children Foundation is like an artier Talking Heads on speed. The singer is male, but sounds like a castrato. Irreverent, wild and fun, these seven songs are a hoot. (AE) Self-released, www.bonelesschildren.com

Booter - S/T, 7"

This French punk groups starts off strong, but I wish they didn't feel the need to slow it down every so often for breaks that seem like they're just going through the motions. When they're fast, they're on point, rocking hard and burning it up. (DAL)

Rumble Fish Corporation, c/o Antonello L'Abbate, via Giusti 93, 72015 Fasano (Br), Italy, www.rumblefishdiv.org

Bound Stems - Levity, CDEP

You know, you twist around in all sorts of literary contortions trying to avoid terms like "math rock," then a band names a song "Sine Cosine Tang Sign." It's free-form and artsy, but while so much similar music spirals off into "high concept" nowheresville, this actually has some great moments. (DAL) Self-released, 2250 West North Ave., #2, Chicago, IL 60647, www.boundstems.com

Boxingwater / Missionshifter – split, 7"

Split vinyl from two highly politicized punk bands, packaged with a CD (featuring bonus tracks and a lengthy speech by Colombian activist Francisco Ruiz). The politics are enlightening, if a little force-fed. Missionshifter has the upper hand, musically. Their style is a burst of fast, loud, wellplayed, well-written, focused rage. Nice! (AJ)

Overlook Records, PO Box 4444, Salem, MA 01970, www.missionshifter.org/overlook.html; Spent Records, www.spentrecords.com

P Briefs, The - Sex Objects, CD

The Briefs take classic '70s punk themes—alienation, fear of Armageddon, hatred of authority—and amp them up for the new millennium. The songs range from the silly ("Killed By Ants") to the political ("Orange Alert" "Kill All Presidents"). I've been a fan of The Briefs since they first started, and the new album doesn't disappoint, wrapping subversive messages in a candycoated shell. They continue doing what they do best—power poppy punk or

Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoyzie (AA)

Pinhead Gunpowder, Carry The Banner, It's a tale of love, lust and heartbreak - all in one fucking song. Any song, really. At 19, I renounced punk rock after watching a generic punk band of middle-aged white men hollerin' about "the man." I got so disillusioned and jaded that even punk rock wasn't a refuge any longer. So I stuck on my miner's cap and hunted for "reinventing the wheel" shit. I found some awesome mindfuck music, but the scene was so thick with pretense you would choke on it at shows. Nostalgia began to burrow its way into my eardrums, and I put Pinhead Gunpowder on to comfort me. Back to back, every single record they've ever released looped continuously until I bled the hyper-caffeinated tea that they're named after. Nine songs never sounded so good, especially when you're 17 and frustrated at the world for taking a poop on you. A dangerous longing permeates "Before The Accident," "I Used To" and "I Am An Elephant," while good ol' fashioned youngster angst blows out in "Walkin' Catastrophe" and "I Am A Stranger." It's a fine balance between growing up and settling down when you listen to your old records and feel just like you did when you first heard them.

POP Punx Not Dead: The Ergs!, dorkrockcorkrod, The Thermals, Fuckin' A; Clorox Girls, S/T; Dillinger Four, Midwestern Songs Of The Americas, Assisted Living Dracula, How Can You Sleep When It's On?

Alligator Gun, ONEHUNDREDPERCENTFREAK. This band got me interested in local music. They broke up right after I found this album, but I saw one of their last shows. The feeling I got from that show made me realize that was where I needed to be. But how did I randomly find this obscure group? When I was a freshman in high school, there was a group of seniors that I looked up to. One day one of them was wearing an Alligator Gun shirt. At that moment I knew I had to seek out that band. After about four months of searching, I found ONEHUNDREDPERCENTFREAK. From first listen, it blew my mind. It's fast but technical and very melodic. I can't pick out what songs are the best because every song is amazing. To this day I don't know what the titles to the songs are because I always listened to the album as a whole. A good description of the music would be All mixed with early Goo Goo Dolls. Members of Alligator Gun are presently in the Burbank Cartel and Dashboard Confessional.

Rock These Tunes: Chisel, 8am All Day; Undertow, Everything (discography); Obsoletes, Is This Progress?; Maritime, Glass Floor; The Shivering, Brand The Lion's Mouth.

punky power pop (however you would define it)—and have a spastic energy that makes you want to get up and dance like a new-wave robot. (JJG) BYO Records, PO Box 67809, Los Angeles, CA 90067, www.byorecords.com

P Briggs, The - Leaving The Ways, CDEP

If you don't know who LA's The Briggs are yet, you will soon. Joey LaRocca, the singer, has an amazing stage presence, and no one who sees them live will ever forget them. They've been touring constantly and opening for various better-known acts, so they're sure to have the following they deserve any day now. They play streetpunk, borrowing greatly from a lot of classic punk sounds and oi. This EP, like their prior recordings, doesn't quite match the energy level of their live show, but it's their best recording to date. It remains to be seen if this type of punk rock can ever become hugely commercial without diluting itself, but if there's a band out there with the potential to make that mark, The Briggs might be it. (AE)

Side One Dummy Records, PO Box 2350, Los Angeles, CA 90078, www.sideonedummy.com

Broken Bones! - No-one Survives, 7"

Pretty straight-forward and pissed-off hardcore record with boring riffs that totally lost any cool points after the lame solos on the second side. (KM) Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, Ga. 91701, www.drstrange.com

Brundel, Seth P. - Devil's Pawn, CD

The attention given to underground hip hop has turned it into a welcome mess, and Miami-based rapper/producer Seth P. Brundel (half of Algorithm) only adds to the quagmire. With murky production and spitfire stream-of-consciousness flow, it heavily nods toward the Cannibal Ox audience, but trades up their eclecticism for a straight-forward approach. Yet, it's still not accessible. Brundel's minimalist production is muted and disciplined, but when the beat is on, the dark moodiness hits with ominous fervor. His flow commands a monotone drawl, relinquishing dynamic for politically charged delivery. Hence, this full-length falls into my main complaint that independent hip hop is tripping over its own clichés of substance-based lyricism and substance (y'know, the other type) based beats. The restraint for "intellectualism" sucks the soul out of an entire listen, much less carry any memorable hooks. I realize the need for socially conscious material to battle the genre's mainstream excess, but that doesn't mean it can't bump and grind like an R. Kelly cut. (VC)

Aesthetics, PO Box 82233, Portland, OR 97282, www.aesthetics-usa.com

Burning Image - 1983-1987, CD

Burning Image were a goth-punk band from Bakersfield who released a demo and a 7" before fading into the mists. Jello Biafra was a fan, so A.T. has released this posthumous collection. It's original, edgy and dark punk

rock in the vein of Christian Death that's well recorded and well worth checking out. (IC)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

C.AARME - S/T, CD

Noisy, Swedish hardcore/garage punk. Not horrible, just kinda "oh, well, whatever." They bite a few Bad Brains riffs but play 'em too slowly. The whiney singer slurs through his verses like a foreign-exchange student who only managed to pull a "B" in L.A. Hardcore 101. (AJ)

Burning Heart/Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.burningheart.com

Captain Everything! - It's Not Rocket Science, CD

Fast, energetic pop punk that may be the best record Fat Wreck Chords didn't release. This UK import reached the states with their third release, which may make NOFX/Warped Tour fans salivate for more. (DM)

Union 2112 Records 78 Rachel East Montreal, Quebec HZW 1C6, Canada, www.unionlabelgroup.com

Cathedral – The Serpent's Gold, CD

Unfortunately, this is only half of a two-disc set, commemorating the best of this doom metal bands' career on Earache. The other disc that comes with the actual release is full of rarities chosen by the band. Powerful metal that brings to mind stoner rock, Thin Lizzy and Iron Maiden. (NS)

Earache Records, 43 West 38th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10018, www.earache.com

Cartridge Family, The - Ball Joins the Navy, CD

The Cartridge Family play sloppy, slow-paced punk rock, with lyrics all seemingly based on inside jokes. They sound enthusiastic enough, and it seems like they're having fun, but all the same this is pretty crummy. (JC) Self-released, art_guerilla@hotmail.com

Cartridge Family - Cold Dead Hands, CDEP

A one-song CD single that is only notable for two reasons: 1) It costs only \$1 and 2) There's part of a John Sinclair conversation with the band. Musically, it's a tough one, with its a straight-up tempo with some keyboards and sloppy sounds along the way. (EA)

Mohawk Trail Records, 410 Liberty St., Lansing, MI 48906, mohawktrailrecords@yahoo.com

Catholic Girls, The – Summer Vacation Rock'n America, CD

This is a new single from this four-piece female punk band from the '80s. This is strictly for nostalgia purposes only for the folks who remember this band. Sorry, but it's not that good. (DM)

Seven Records / self-released, 135 Highland Cross, Rutherford, NJ 07070, www.catholicgirls.net

Chainsaw / Crunky Kids - Far East Meets Mid West, 7"

I get the sinking suspicion that I may have been assigned to review this because I've gotz the yellow skin abouts me since I don't particularly enjoy

hardcore. The Chunky Kids from Ohio spit out anti-Nationalism while Japan's Chainsaw mingle with some gnarly guitar solos. (AA) Hibachi, 497 Owego St., Painesville, 0H 44077-4122

9 Channels - Open, CDEP

Hot damn, J. Robbins (Jawbox/Burning Airlines) has returned, this time with his wife, Janet Morgan, on bass/vocals and Darren Zentek (Kerosene 454) on drums. I think this goes without saying, but just in case: It's great. Fans of Robbins' previous bands should have no problem trying Channels on for size, as the music mines similar territory as Burning Airlines. Morgan's occasional vocals are a nice touch, lending a certain ethereal quality. Musically, Robbins is up to his usual tricks, particularly with his intricate quitar work—check the end of "To Mt. Wilson From The Magpie Cage." Robbins has never been content to strum power chords, and his playing is simply amazing. "Chivaree," with its infectious energy and its climactic ending, is the best track among the six standouts on here. Closer "Win Instantly" is a bit of a departure, with Morgan taking handling vocal duties over mostly subdued, moody guitar and drums. Robbins is a D.C. scene lifer, and the post-punk sound that apparently hangs in the air there gets refined in Channels. It's eclectic, expertly constructed and layered—the work of people who have been doing this for a long time. Robbins & co. have never sounded better, (KR)

DeSoto Records, PO Box 60932, Washington, DC 20039, www.desotorecords.com

Cheaters Club, The - Tryst, CD

This Casio-type home recording includes guitar, keys, drums and loops. The production isn't that great, but that's OK. I really enjoyed the electronic drums and percussion, but the monotone vocals left me totally cold and suicidal. (DI)

Self-released, youcanbreathenow@hotmail.com

Cheech – Keep Your Pimp Hand Strong, CD

Initially I was too critical of this release. It's brutal as all hell, tough as fuck hXc with just enough metal licks to keep it sounding like NYxHC circa 1987. But when I took a closer listen and heard Jimmy Gestapo (Murphy's Law) singing about beer with a bear of a vocalist, I needed to restart this release. Sure it's brutal, but these guys like to mock the MTV generation of punk/hXc-lite and have a sense of humor (if the title didn't give it away). At first I was wondering why we need another hXc band with goofy lyrics, but I realized we haven't had one do it like this in some time. These guys really take the music seriously but also take a serious approach toward the lyrics as well. The hXc scene needs a sense of humor, for real. These boys make Boston proud. Let the floor punching begin! (DM)

Dank Records/ NGS Records, PO Box 334 Westbont, IL 60559, www.ngsrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

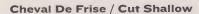
Jerry Lee Lewis, Classic Complete Sun Recordings 1956-1963. I can tell you that Mr. Jerry Lee Lewis has been a punk rocker before, during and after there was such a tag. Everyone should own this Bear Family eight-CD box set. You may not feel the need for 245 tracks, but I can tell you I own over 40 LP's worth of his music, and this box set is worth every penny. Forget your cheapo samplers and greatest hits, because they will only include poor copies of every song that you have already heard to death. Instead purchase every mumble, false start and take recorded in Sun studios. If have any rock 'n' roll in your bones, then you will pick this up and read through the LP-sized book that comes with it. If you've never owned a Bear Family release, they are the masters of putting together boxes and classics. Right before a classic cut of "Great Balls Of Fire," you hear Jerry saying "What am I gonna eat? I would like to eat a little pussy if I had some." Classic Lewis indeed. Without this box set, you are denied his character, and some versions of songs are so powerful you may just forget about music from the last few decades. It is expensive, as are all Bear Family eight-CD box set. You may not feel the music from the last few decades. It is expensive, as are all Bear Family eight-CD box set. You may not feel the music from the last few decades. It is expensive, as are all Bear Family eight-CD box set. You may not feel the feel to make the will be you are at it—one of the best writers of the last century. The book along with the box set are my two "deserted island," possessions.

Turntable is constantly spinning: The Rolling Stones cover singles on Norton Records (get 'em all); Clorox Girls; and one of the best pop records, the Figgs Lo-Fi At Society High (you need it, really.)

Reviewer Spotlight: Abbie Amadio (AJA)

Notaword, You Can Only Grow So Much. The word "emo" has gotten a very bad reputation over the years. And not bad in a shake-your-head kind of way, but a way in which, when the word is mentioned, there's a shudder and a declaration of the person deemed "emo" as a complete dud with no discerning musical taste whatsoever. A scoff, if you will. But the term didn't use to be so bastardized as it is today, now connoting the black hair dyed, bespectacled minions of Taking Back Sunday devotees. Notaword can be identified more with the mid-'90s Midwestern version of the word, fitting in with bands like Braid and the Promise Ring. They were the first band I ever saw in my hometown that felt important; they were older, weren't playing ska and were a band to look up to. With catchy songs that remained grounded, and singer Chad Ashley's charismatic stage presence—he genuinely delivered, rather than succumbing to phoned-in posturing—they played solid shows every time I saw them. You Can Only Grow So Much has some of their best, most memorable and inviolable of their songs—"Watership Down," "Last One In" and "The Best Policy"—songs that can easily stand up against any of the better work of the aforementioned contemporaries. It's wonderful to listen to this record and remember the swell in my chest upon seeing their first show and feeling that something happening in front of me that commanded me to listen.

Listening to what? Les Savy Fav, Inches; X; Black Eyes, Cough; Neil Young, Harvest Moon; Pixies, Surfer Rosa.





© Cheval De Frise - S/T. CD

By definition, a Cheval De Frise is an obstacle consisting of barbed wire or spikes attached to a wooden frame used to block an advancing enemy force or deter intruders. This instrumental band of the same name has some issues with accessibility too. Although their technical prowess is inarguable, Cheval De Frise's torrential deconstructionist style doesn't translate to recording. It isn't for lack of production quality, just lack of vulnerability. Their dark melody lines and timing signatures are exceptional but not engaging, dragging all ears through a cavalcade of dissonant compositions, each track leaving the listener with less of an appreciation for the band's musicianship. Their self-titled debut is worth its weight as a document of that skill, but their live show might be a truer performance. (CC) sicknown Records, 90 Box 47830, Chicago, 16 6647, www.sickroomrecords.com

Chinese Stars, The - A Rare Sensation, CD

The Chinese Stars includes former members of Arab On Radar. Although less chaotic sounding than AOR, it's still in the experimental-rock vein. Some of these mostly fast-paced songs have off-kilter elements reminiscent of Blonde Redhead, though not quite the complexity. (BA)

Three One G Records, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, www.threeoneg.com

Cinch, The - Shake If You Got It, CD

Dirtnap's calling it "primitive, detached VU drone fronted by a couple of female Richard Hells," and I'm reminded that people in Seattle are all on dope. Too clean to be primitive, more repetitive than droning, and the singing's too pretty to be R. Hell. Sounds like decent-but-anonymous indie-rock to me. (JC) Dirtnap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecs.com

P Circles Over Sidelights - ...On Becoming A Person, CD

As I write this, the Circles Over Sidelights' website says they just finished recording the follow-up to this record already, and these guys just graduated high school. I guess that might not be that impressive unless I mention that this is a great recording. They mix technical, melodic riffs with metalcore, thrash and plain old metal. At times sounding a bit like Opeth and a little like Converge, yet keeping originality. I am excited to see how these guys grow musically. So far, I am pretty impressed. (TK) Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.immigrantsun.com

Cocker Spaniels, The - Withstand The Whatnot, CD

The Cocker Spaniels are actually one guy named Sean Padilla. Sean is a talented singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist playing music that sounds like a lo-fi Built To Spill while singing about college, relationships and every single thing that ever happened to him. Certainly worth a listen. (SJ) Artbreak Recordings, PO Box 84642, Waco, TX 76798, www.artbreakrecordings.com.

Code, The - Rhetoric Of Reason, CDEP

The Code are talented youth from Pittsburgh, who show their varied styles

on this five-song EP. There's a catchy ska-core track, two hardcore tracks, a cover of Op Ivy's "Unity" and a hidden alternate version of the ska-core track. Mixed at The Blasting Room, this record's great production captures their dynamic energy. (AE)

Jump Start Records, PO Box 10296, State College, PA 16805, www.jumpstartrecords.com

Coliseum - S/T, CD

Boring hardcore metal that neither offends nor excites. It stays on a level plane, not exceeding expectations or going lower than them. The singer has the same problem a lot of metal singers have: Every song is sung in the same gravelly pitch, making them all interchangeable. (JJG) Level Plane, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

9 Comas, The - Conductor, CD

Even though they're not from Britain, The Comas play Britpop à la Doves and Ride, and they do it really well. The guitars rock out, but there is always a synth or a dreamy pedal steel to keep it from getting too garagey. My only objection is the track order. The first seven songs all rock, but then the last three are all really mellow. They could have spaced it a little better, but I guess they had a different agenda. The highlight is actually the DVD that comes with the CD, which turns the whole album into one long, surreal music video. (SJ)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Communiqué - Poison Arrows, CD

On their first full-length release, Communiqué unleashes surprisingly catchy Britpop-tinged dance music. Full of keyboards and poppy melodies, Poison Arrows doesn't disappoint. "Ouija Me" is the perfect reincarnation of '80s synth, while "Black Curses" is just as good as anything in the NYC electropop scene. Simon Lebon would be proud. (MP)

Lookout! Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Compulsions, The - Laughter From Below, CDEP

This is total bar-band music. If I didn't know any better I'd think I just got the new John Mellencamp to review. Lots of blazing guitar solos and lyrics about dancing in fires and dealings with the devil. Worst review CD ever. (KM)
Self-released, www.thecomoulsionsnyc.com

Concubine Forming - The Guilt Will Kill, CD

Have you ever wondered what Ministry would sound like they played in some dingy basement club or seedy bar in Virginia? No? For those hardcore fans wondered what Ministry would sound like without the theatrics, excitement or hair-brained creativity, Concubine Forming is the answer. (MS)
Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reston VA 20195 www.bigneckrecords.com

Confidence Man - The Miracle Of Modern Living, CD

I wasn't crazy about this one. The singer seems too earnest, and the music

sounds like it's trying too hard to be feel-good and sensitive. Then the songs are interrupted by a "hard rockin" part. To top it off, the singer sounds like he's imitating Eddie Vedder. (JJG)

Self-released, www.confidenceman.com

Conshafter - Fear The Underdog, CD

Stop the madness. Too many seriously good melodic albums are coming out in 2004, with this being one of the very best. Conshafter sound like a punker Cheap Trick. This is an oddly mature debut, with each song playing like the punk version of a hit single. (AE)

Dork Epiphany, 13602 Pebble Creek Court, Midlothlan, VA 23112, www.dorkepiphany.com

P Controller.Controller - History, CDEP

Here we have a group of post-punk revivalists making good with a genre re-emergence that is quickly becoming stale. I gotta say that I'm a sucker for the dance-punk/funk-punk jams, but even a kitsch-lovin' broad like me gets sick of repetition. So it's nice to hear records like this, where the band can stay true to the form while remaining original and fun and interesting. While Controller.Controller execute the rhythmic post-punk sound to a perfect T, they also add and arrange different sonic elements in their songs. Perfect dancefunk jams (complete with angular guitar lines, heavy bass and drum lines, and sweet disco grooves) are interspersed with noisy, atmospheric soundscapes, Joy Division-esque gloominess and shoegazey guitar layers. Whether you're an Au Pairs/Gang of Four fan or a Radio 4/Rapture fan, you will love this record. (MG)

Paper Bag Records, 455 Spandina Ave., Ste. 306, Toronto, ON MSS 268, Canada, www.paperbagrecords.com

Court And Spark, The - Witch Season, CD

The third album from the West Coast country-pop act sees a continuing expansion in sound. *Witch Season* has a starry-night sheen to it and a light—almost jazzy—psychedelic flourish. The band is best when the background atmospheres take over and drift the songs into the cosmos. (TM) Absolutely Kosher Records 1412 10th St., Berkeley, CA. 94710, www.absolutelykosher.com

Cub Country - Stay Poor/Stay Happy, CD

Fine alt-country album by Jets To Brazil member Jeremy Chatelain (plus a few of his drinking buddies). Disappointed by Wilco's current psychedelic excursions and long for the *Being There* days? Then pick this up. It's just what you're looking for. (AJ)

Future Farmer Recordings, PO Box 225128, San Francisco, CA 94122, www.futurefarmer.com

Cut Shallow - Watch It Cave In, CD

This is total screamo, which really isn't my thing. Like all other bands in the genre, Cut Shallow are tight and melodic, but it sounds kind of generic to me. (SJ)

Basement Records, PO Box 511, La Habra, CA 90633, www.basementrecords.net

Reviewer Spotlight: Bill Angelbeck (BA)

Big Black, Songs about Fucking. I had been a Big Black fan when this came out in 1987, and I picked it up on cassette. This was Steve Albini's first major band, and the notorious vinyl snob would have been appalled by the tape. I was with a friend at the time and played it in the car's tape deck and turned the volume clockwise. The first track, "The Power Of Independent Trucking," put it all out there at their noisiest: razor-edged guitars, unintelligible screams drowning under feedback and jackhammer drums. I wasn't quite prepared for the onslaught; it was much more abrasive than their previous work. Once it finished, I stopped it to let it soak in. My friend, thinking the tape was damaged, said, "Man, do you think they will let you take that back?" I just punched the cassette right back in—no doubt my 3-inch tweeters only added to its causticity. Not all tracks are so cacophonous. They slow down at points, as with "Tiny, King Of The Jews," letting the industrial drum machine beats come through more cleanly through the guitars and allowing the lyrics be somewhat understood. On most tracks, the vocals are so down in the mix that you feel the need to turn it up to hear the words, making you even more subject to the overall sonic assault. Nearly two decades later, this still stands its ground as a monument in noisy post-punk. And the liner notes are a good read, too.

Current Listens: Liars, They Were Wrong, So We Drowned; PJ Harvey, Uh Huh Her; Deerhoof, Milkman; Nina Nastasia, Dogs (Reissue); Radian, Juxtaposition (reviewed this issue).

Reviewer Spotlight: Jay Castaldi (JC)

Fossil Fuel, self-titled cassette. I say without exaggeration that this is the punkest album ever. A cassette-only release from 1991 on the legendary Wheelchair Full 0f Old Men label, Fossil Fuel pretty much lays to waste all music ever created before or since. The band Fossil Fuel is two idiots from Sockeye and "the punk drumbeat maker" (i.e. the preprogrammed rhythm patterns of a shitty Casio keyboard). Apparently what they'd do is get super wasted on cheap beer, turn on the four-track recorder, and let the good lord speak through them. Classics include "Martians Are Punk," "Toys Are Sexy," "Fuck Your Underpants," "James Monroe Invented Punk" and so on. Ninety minutes of absolute genius-level brilliance! Don't believe me? Check out the opening lines of "Toreadors." "If you're ever bullfighting in Mexico, toreadors are really fuckin' tough! They'll make you wanna shit your fuckin' pants! They're fuckin' crazy! They listen to the hardest of core..." Of course, this is backed by out of tune guitars and the ever-present punk drumbeat maker, and it totally obliterates the line between asinine and awesome. Utterly stupid and utterly amazing. Every single person I've introduced to Fossil Fuel has become an instant fan and insisted I copy it for them. But then, you're probably way cooler than the people I hang out with. Fuck you, your loss.

Five aces: Sahara Hotnights, Kiss & Tell (D; The Hives, Tyrannosaurus Hives LP, Fastbacks, Truth, Corrosion And Sour Bisquits (D (reviewed this issue); Buzzcocks, Complete Singles Anthology 3x(D; The Melvins, Neither Here Nor There Book + CD.

Cut the Shit / Divide By Zero

9 Cut The Shit - Marked For Life, CD

Seeing this in my box put a big smile on my face. I knew exactly what to expect: thrashy, unrelenting hardcore. It has a lot in common lyrically and musically with bands like Tear It Up and Down In Flames. From what I have gathered, this CD combines their new 10" and two earlier 7-inches. This is the music I want to hear when I just had a bad day at work, and I just want to kick holes in the wall. Essential. (DA)

Gloom Records, PO Box 14253, Albany, NY 12212, www.gloomrecords.com

🤊 Czolgosz / Critica Radicala – So Mai Cares, CD

CR starts this split off like a crooning Communist dictator who likes to sing to early TSOL karaoke in his native tongue. But just like TSOL, you can dig it or hate it. Czolgosz, on the other hand, really have gotten their sound down; it's reminiscent of yesteryear while keeping it fresh, like Avail or Government Issue. This is a really good politico-punk split that's not the "they lie, we die!" rerun type of stuff. Worth checking out. (DM)
Sept. 6 Records / self-released, www.zolgosz.com

Czolgosz / En La Olla – split, 7"

Two good sides of classic hardcore. The Czolgosz side features a punked-up cover of the Cure's "Killing Of An Arab," while En La Olla's songs are all in Spanish with a little bit of Mexican flavor in the music. (JJG)
Sept. 6 Records / Self-released, www.czolgosz.com

Dead Celebrities, The / Hailmarys, The - split, CD

This solid split between two fine St. Louis bands includes The Dead Celebrities, who put out a lot of releases and are perfecting their brand of poppy punk. The Hailmarys have a metal influence, ex-members of the legendary Ultraman and gritty female vocals. (AE)

Fat Fish Records, PO Box 26953, St. Louis, MO 63118-9998, www.fatfishrecords.net

Dead In Hollywood - S/T, CDEP

What the hell is the Excursion website talking about comparing these guys to "Kid Dynamite and latter-era Lifetime?" Most of the songs are midtempo melodic nü-hardcore. Maybe they've got a good live show, but the monotone screaming was too high in the mix to appreciate the music, which sounds mediocre anyway. (TK)

Excursion Records, PO Box 20224, Seattle, WA 98102, www.excursionrecords.com

Dead Rabbit - Sex Crimes, CD

This reminds me of watching a baboon play with its own shit. Dead Rabbit's got no flow, a missing chromosome and bigotry to share. "All women are sluts and bitches/ all they deserve is cuts and stitches." Send me money—I'm starting a fund to have his lips sewn shut. (BM)

Self-released, 8991 Woodward Way, Sacramento, CA 95662, www.deadrabbit.com

Deadseraphim - Discography, CD

Unintelligible chihuahua-like howling, shoes-in-the-dryer drums, "cute" non sequitur song titles, octave chords—you can call it screamo, but I'm going to pretend I lost its number. (RR)

The Electric Human Project, 500 South Union St., Wilmington, DE 19805, www.electrichumanproject.com

Deadlock Frequency - Traffic, enhanced CDEP

The intro made me think this was going to be awful, but it quickly turned into heavy, technical hardcore occasionally reminiscent of Talk Is Poison. The band features members of Scott Baio Army and Planes Mistaken For Stars. With every song it gets better. (DA)

Not Bad World Industries, www.notbadrecords.com

Vinyl is something sacred, and patience is a virtue. This LP came to me a little warped due to the weather, but I carefully listened to it with open arms. You get four songs and 20 minutes of moody, jazz-punk instrumentals. The first suite is "Male"/"Female" clocking in at two and 10 minutes respectively. The guitar phrases repeat over and over on "Female"—so much I had to double check the record wasn't skipping. You get to hear two- and three-note harmonics and lots of reverb. The closing song, "Innocence," was my favorite. The bass line is really heavy and carries the song. Then, at the very end, the electricity ceases, and the drums close out the song, pounding away for several measures. I loved every minute of this record. Now I gotta track down them on tour this weekend in my town. (DI) Gean Plate Records, PO Box 9461 North Amherst, MA 01059, www.cdeanplate.com

Deconditioned - Overpopulation Begins And Ends With You, 7"

Bringing it back to where it came from, Deconditioned rep the spirit of '84 nicely with six spirited bursts of discontent. Topics on Deconditioned hit lists range from hypocritical Christians to hardcore pretty boys, all of which are attacked with raucous and ferocious energy. Don't forget your roots! (MS) Banal Existence Records, 2706 Hannard Ave E., Seattle WA 98102, berecords@aol.com

Deep Enough To Die - My City Of Ruin, CD

These guys are technically sound and obviously skilled musicians, yet the total lack of empathy in the vocals and the writing brings their radio-friendly brand of emo crashing down. What we have in the end is a precise and well-recorded disc devoid of any originality or emotion. (BN)

Dressed To Kill Records, PO Box 24716, Philadelphia, PA 1911, www.dressedtokill.org

Derringer – A Rock And Roll Tragedy, CD

Deranged screamo with heavily distorted lead vocals and insanely intense melodies. I almost wish this was an instrumental record because I can't

shake the feeling that the vocals are ruined by the overzealous production, but "Hearts Like Hand Grenades" and "The Color Of Sadness" are enough to win me over. (BN)

Zero Velocity Records, c/o Brendan Burns, 609 Belgian Drive, Bear, DE 19701, www.zerovelocityrecords.com

Die Princess Die, S/T, CD

DPD's thick, dirty sound is ferocious, meaty and gritty. With trashy, distorted guitar and heavy, thick bass, DPD is noisy but the still bring the rock to the mix. Reminiscent of the old bands on Gravity Records, this album is quirky and eccentric and just plain awesome. (EH)

Cut Lips Recordings, 1515 Vine St., San Diego, CA, 92103, www.cutlips.com

Die Young - The Message, CD

The band's name definitely didn't get my hopes up, but I have to admit that I was pleasantly surprised. The music is pretty brutal modern hardcore, à la Hatebreed and Amendment 18. There are small touches of metal, but they're never overpowering. (DA)

Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.immigrantsun.com

Digby - Falling Up, CD

Mainstream, accessible rock-based pop, Digby are (not) rocking the boat with other like-minded bands as Train or Semisonic. Their songs seemed to be lacking the annoying catchiness of a radio hit, but I'm sure spinning the hell out of any one of these tracks would do the job. (AJA)

Toucan Cove Entertainment, 800 Fifth Ave. #101-292, Seattle, WA 98104-3191, www.toucancove.com / Label X, 120 Webster Ave, Ste. 222, Louisville, KY 40206, www.labelx.us

Dimlaia - S/T, CD

It's by turns droning and shredding, but it always sounds like the microphone was tucked away in someone's pants. As it goes on it actually gets much less thrashified and more, um, introspective. Yeah, yeah, so I'm kinda digging a metal album. So sue me. (DAL)

Life is Abuse, PO Box 20524, Oakland, CA 94620, www.lifeisabuse.com

Dina - Work the Switch, CD

More predictable indie rock—chock-full of heavy chug-a-chug-a guitar riffs, on queue breakdowns and chorus harmonies you've come to either love or loathe. (I'm the latter.) (RL)

Just Say No To Government Music, PO Box 1025, Blackpool, FY3 0FA, UK, www.jsntgm.com

Divide By Zero - Timber, CDEP

I don't recall this Chicago band's last EP being this complex or mature. The three post-hardcore songs delivered here demonstrate great range and ability. A full-length is currently in development, and if this EP is any indication of what they have in store, it should be a keeper. (AE)

Waste of Time Records, PO Box 16, Monee, IL 60449, www.wasteoftimerecords.net

Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

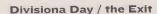
Krapper Keeper, cassette. My friend Tom went apartment hunting with these guys. While looking at a disheveled house (the previous tenants had left abruptly, leaving their belongings behind), they listened to their answering machine. The first message was an irate woman who informed them, "WHEN WE FIND YOU MOTHERFUCKERS, I'M GOING TO FUCKING KILL YOU UNLESS YOU GOT MY FUCKING MONEY." They didn't get the apartment, but P. Paw, Mee Ma, and Grampa Bampa swiped the tape because it had Krapper Keeper potential. This was their songwriting process. Co-existing in the Triangle music scene with the likes of Superchunk and Polvo, they epitomized Raleigh's scene debauchery in the mid- to late '90s with their passion for ambulatory devices. (I'm serious. Back in Ryan Adams' heyday, people thought it was cool to come to parties with walkers and crutches.) The trio's infamous live shows embraced diapers, wheelchairs and old people masks. One in particular was a public outdoor event sponsored by wimpy alcohol connoisseurs, Zima. They were in town looking for the next "alternative" band, which of course Krapper Keeper volunteered heartily for: "We're alternative!" Armed with several cases of Zima and a giant banner, the band played their Negativland-on-crack tape looped madness while giving themselves onstage "Zima-nas," horribly offending any witnesses at the park that day. While the music was never memorable (although you can find tracks on a Wifflefist compilation, which might still be in print), their reputation remains to be a lost treasure in a small-town music scene.

Future karaoke hits: Under Pressure, Still No Future LP; The Baseball Furies, Greater Than Ever LP; The Cro-mags, Before The Quarret, This Is My Fist! S/T CD; The Sultans, Shipwrecked LP.

Reviewer Spotlight: Carla Costa (CC)

Throwing Muses, The Real Ramona. It was in the late '80s when the tide began to turn. College radio charts began to document the bands that were truly at the helm of innovating a stifled rock scene. Playing a pivotal role in the formative years of, what would later become, modern or "alternative" rock was an unsuspecting band from the Littlest State in the Union. Steered by stepsisters Kristin Hersh (vocals/guitar) and Tanya Donelly (guitar/vocals), Rhode Island's Throwing Muses were the first American band signed to England's prestigious 4AD record label. Their fourth (and final album with Donelly aboard), The Real Ramona, is the quintessence of the band: witty, spry and ghostly. Hersh and Donelly's ethereal harmonies reverberate through the album, weaving into their dual—charging and angular—guitar melodies, with Dave Narcizo's drums hammering out equal parts tribal and punk, and Fred Abong's bass deepening and lulling the rhythms. What made Throwing Muses unique was their fearless foray into an unknown sound that, appropriately enough, ended up to be the American parallel of the Brit shoegaze upstarts. More importantly, the Hersh and Donelly duo became icons of ingenuity whose music took those of us trapped in the smallest corner of the country into their own expansive, eccentric world.

Can't Get Enough: Palace, Viva Last Blues, Kitchen Sink Magazine, Drawing Blood by Poppy Z. Brite; Six Feet Under, Jean Luc Goddard's Band of Outsiders.





Division Day - The Mean Way In, CDEP

Boring, Turn on MTV2's Subterranean, and I'm sure you'll see Division Day on there soon. Totally unmoving, keyboard-driven pop-rock. (DA) Undetected Plagiarism, 2750 Dwight Way, #2, Berkeley, CA 94704, www.undetectedplagiarism.com

Door-Keys, The - Greenwood Park Mall, CD

The Door-Keys keep it simple, and it works for them. Their breed of earnest, straight-up indie rock, led by dual male/female vocals, is reminiscent of the qualities that made '90s college radio so great. Although they're one lo-fi band that'd actually benefit from hi-fi production quality. (CC) Plan-It-X Records, PO Box 3521, Bloomington, IN 47404, www.plan-it-x.com

Dolour - New Old Friends, CD

I listened to this entire record all the way through three times before I sat down to type a single letter about it. I'd like that known. I could have stopped after the first line, after hearing Shane Tutmarc's voice and the words spoke, knowing that what was to come was the unstoppably slick pop of a group who'd put Chris Collingwood (Fountains Of Wayne) or Glenn Tilbrook (Squeeze) on the dollar bill if they could. It's all idyllic relief from anything high-strung or preachy. Well-arranged and light-hearted, Dolour do everything right for a band just reaching its third record. Oh, that first line: "You look like I could use a drink." You can't even force yourself to stop after such a reflective piece of observation. (SM)

Self-released, www.douiour.com

Don't Look Down - The Fear In Love, CD

Mature and melodic dark punk rock that may be mistaken for emo at first. Pop punkers grow up on this record and make good with the Rick Springfield/No Motiv vocal stylings. Enjoyable but not memorable. (DM) Nitro Records, www.nitrorecords.com

Donuts, The - Sgt Jack's Pepper Mill, CD

The Donuts' gimmick is that they make self-aware, vacant pop music and are not necessarily ashamed of it. Well, I gotta agree with them. There is absolutely nothing of substance on this record. The scary fucking thing is I don't loathe this record like my My Bloody Valentine "did you hear that squeal from Kevin Shield's fuzz box?" record geek-self should. I would certainly never buy it, but I would be lying if I said there weren't any guilty moments on this record. Damn you, Donuts! (RL)

Chapter 7 Records / self-released, www.thedonuts.com

Droom - Blood Culture, CDEP

Whoa, Droom makes me kind of like industrial-tinged, gothy dance music! Go Droom! (JG)

Self-released, www.droom-music.com

9 84 Nash - A Secret Reward, CD

Wasn't Rivers Cuomo trying to devise some sort of formula for writing pop

songs? I think these guys beat him to it. 84 Nash has stripped away the tarnish of music like Didi 7, without taking anything away from its key element. Their songs cut right to the melodic goodness of songwriting, without making it too simple or formulaic. On the contrary! Even though few of their ditties clock in at more than three minutes, they're filled with joyful singing, bouncy bass lines, jangly and slightly new wavy guitars, and upbeat rhythms. Not only that, a lot of songs feature spacey keyboards and some other creative "noises" that I can't even identify. My favorite song has to be "Everybody's Got A Skull." It's so infectious and upbeat that you'd have to be a cyborg not to nod your head a little while it plays. Unless you're one of those new anti-party fun-time cyborgs. GBV frontman, Robert Pollard, even released an album of theirs, if that floats your boat. (NS) We Want Action, 1510 Runaway Bay Dr., #26, Columbus, OH 43204-3847,

Ela - Stapled To Air, CD

College rock from Minneapolis about breaking up. The album doesn't wallow in pity, but it doesn't really get off the couch either. (TM) Third Earth Music, 784 Columbus Ave., #4M New York 10025, www.thirdearthmusic.com

Electric Frankenstein / Strap-Ons, The / Fux, The / Moral Minority – split, 7"

Electric Frankenstein's still around? I wasn't aware of that. I'm really glad that each band only had one song on here. Lots of rock sounds and lots of solos. If that's what you're into, then you should check into this. (DA) Valiant Death Records, 22543 James River Dr., Carrollton, VA 23314 www.valiantdeath.com

Emperor X - Tectonic Membrane / Thin Strip On An Edgeless Platform, CD

Flowing from straight indie-rock into drone-laden pop with splashes of ambient sparkles, this record is all over the place. Diverse enough to make you think your CD player's gone manic, but well done overall. Emperor X (aka Chad Matheny) manages to craft a solid album out of fits of chaos. (JG) Discos Mariscos, www.discosmariscos.com

Endicott - The Words In The Ink Don't Lie, CD

This is exactly the kind of release you'd expect from Equal Vision these days: nü-emo or whatever they're calling it: fusing metal, emo, hardcore and a singer who can yelp along with the poppy parts, then gets all emotional and belts out an angry scream. Radio ready. (KM)

Equal Vision Records, PO Box Albany, NY 12203-8202, www.equalvision.com

English Softhearts, The - Double Platinum, CD

I'm not sure what these guys are trying to accomplish here. I hear Devo, I hear early PIL, and I even hear Jesus And Mary Chain. But mostly I hear the suck. (DM)

The Magic Spot Productions, PO Box 146 River Grove, IL 60171, www.themagicspot.com

© Erase Today - Colour Sound & Vibration, CD

Any band that has a song called "Rock And Roll" already has some strikes against them in my book. To top it off, the song isn't good. The music is rock 'n' rolly melodic punk with bad vocals. Even when they switch to the Shudder To Think-sounding guy, it's still annoying. I just want to finish writing this review so I can stop listening to this CD. I guarantee that as soon as I finish this review. I'll never listen to this again, (DA)

JSNTGM Records, 51 Southbourne Rd., Blackpool Lancs FY3 9SH, UK, www.jsntgm-records.co.uk

Escaped, The - Rose City Hard Core, CD

This is old school hardcore punk metal that is done with a lot of conviction and played well. I am a northwesterner and was surprised to see it's from Portland, Ore. I always associated them with indie-pop bands or bands like The Epoxies.(JJG)

Blackout! Records Box 610, Hoboken NJ 07030, www.blackoutrecords.com

Even The Odd - Popular Among Van Owners, CD

I guess that some people would call this "rock and roll." So, let me define this as the "rock and roll" of the alternative rock stations— and not the newly popular "rock 'ri roll" like the White Stripes or Yeah Yeah Yeahs, but the popular "rock and roll," like Nickelback. Huh? (MG)

Wrong Records, 378 Third Ave. Penthouse, New York, NY 10016, www.wrongrecords.net

Everyones, The - S/T, CD

A solid second album of power pop from these Australians. Heavy on R.E.M. and The Smiths, it's not entirely unique, but the lush, layered guitar hooks help keep songs interesting, especially album opener "Pocket" and "Trans Highway One." (MP)

Shock Records, www.shock.com.au

Ewigkeit - Radio Ixtlan, CD

Industrial-tinged melodic metal that keeps a pinch of prog in its back pocket. This just seems like something that you'd hear during the end credits of a shabby Matrix knock-off. (DH)

Earache Records, 43 West 38th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10018, www.earache.com

9 Exit. The - Home For An Island, CD

Apparently the members of The Exit listened to a lot of Police records since their 2002 full-length, because this record veers quite a bit from their noisier post-punk. Track one, "Don't Push," with its heavily delayed guitar, bass phrasing and drum work (especially in the chorus) sounds positively dub. And that's mellow compared to the eighth track, "So Leave Then." It's practically a reggae song, complete with steel drums, and is super-poppy—the kind of music you'd hear at summer street festivals. As vocalists Ben Brewer and leff Darosa trade singing duties, the songs don't sound like The Exit until "Italy" or "Let's Go To Haiti" (the first appearance of energy that could be described as punk). After the sunshine of "So Leave Then," the record takes a left turn in sequencing with an acoustic singer/songwriter song, "Soldier."

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

V/A, Pogo Attack. A lot has changed in punk rock in the decade since this trailblazing street-punk compilation came out on Pogo Punk Records, but it's still an incredible sampling of some of the best the '90s had to offer. It features two songs each from The Casualties, Banner Of Hope, The Pist, Distraught, Mankind?, 86'd, Blanks 77, The Wretched Ones, Dysfunctional Youth, The Bristles, Aus Rotten and The Vomit Punks. Many of the bands, like Aus Rotten, Mankind? and The Pist are rightfully some of the more recognizable bands of the genre. But some of the bands have been forgotten already, like The Vomit Punks, who had one of the craziest-sounding, shrillest female vocalists ever. Also overlooked these days are Banner Of Hope, Dysfunctional Youth and 86'd, all of whom were great. There's an interesting mix of political and apolitical bands on this compilation, a definite mark of its era. Mean-spirited types with a lack of understanding of punk history mock The Casualties and their current popularity, but looking back on this compilation and how underground this type of punk rock once was, it's a truly remarkable cultural phenomenon that Casualties shirts are being sold at malls today. I, for one, support it.

Summer melted into fall with: I Attack (ex-Crudos), S/T, Call The Police, 1984 In 2003, S.O.D., Speak English Or Die (official vinyl reissue), ANTISEEN, The 20th Anniversary Show DVD, Limp Wrist, Discography.

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

Slits, Cut. The Slits are probably best known as the forbearers of the Riot Grrrl movement, as well as being one of the classic UK post-punk bands. Just about every loved Riot Grrrl group of the 1990s has cited them as an influence, and their importance in the punk rock canon cannot go unrecognized. Like their riotous daughters, the Slits (along with groups like the Raincoats, Lilliput and the Au Pairs) revolutionized an era of tough-guy punk rock by taking a more girlcentric approach. They deconstructed the hard and heavy three-chord structure by playing a more minimal, funky and rhythmic brand of punk. This album is definitely a quintessential record. Reggae, dub and other world sounds are incorporated into a simple, albeit catchy, and melodic structure. Plus, their smart social commentary cannot be overlooked. "Typical Girls," their most popular song, is a smooth and rhythm-heavy commentary on gender stereotyping, and "So Tough" sheds light on the silly, rebellious façade taken on by punk boys of the time like Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious. This is a definitive must-have for any punk rocker's collection.

Can't stop listening to: Measles Mumps Rubella, Fountain of Youth EP; Tamion 12 Inch, Let's Suffer, GD Luxxe, Between Zero & Eternity, Sparks, A Woofer In Tweeter's Clothing, Shoplifting, Hegemony Enemy 7".

Exit Condition / the Four Eyes

The closer, "Already Gone," is the record's best track, and it incorporates some elements of electronica before climaxing into a guitar-based rock assault. This musically schizophrenic—and altogether lackluster—record sounds like a band whose members are going down different musical paths. (KR) Some Records, 24th Floor, 345 7th Ave., New York, NY 10001, www.some.com

9 Exit Condition - 1988-1994, CD

This rules. Buy it! Buy it! Really, that should be the entire review, but I'll clue you in. This is what discographies should be. The booklet gives you a detailed history of the band, including what releases the songs are from. Musically this rules. They started out combining melody with speedy hard-core à la Adrenalin OD. As you get a little further in, they drop the speed, but keep the melody. The sound moves more in the direction of Chicago bands like Naked Raygun and Sludgeworth. The later stuff sounds like it would have come out of Wisconsin in the mid-'90s. I could totally picture these guys playing a show with Vacuum Scam, Vesicular Basalt and Flex Luther. You have no idea how much I love this. How many bands can put together a discography and not have a bad song on it? We have one such band here. (DA)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK www.bosstuneage.com

Exploder - S/T, CD

Post-emo rock with a touch of pop for a little different sound. Reminds me a lot of the unknown bands that you would find on MTV2. (I've never seen the channel, but I'm guessing.) This is well-produced, and paint-by-thenumbers punk of the newer generation. (EA)

Moodswing, 3172 East Ponce De Leon Ave., Atlanta, GA 30079, www.moodswingrecords.com

Fall, The – The Real New Fall LP...Formerly The Country On The Click, CD

Like Wire and the Buzzcocks, this decades-old punk act has recently rediscovered its vigor. Yet with dozens of albums and compilations released since the late '70s, getting into The Fall can be a bit overwhelming. This, however, is as good a place to start as any. Like any Fall album, there's some throwaway tracks, but the hits vastly outnumber the misses. Especially noteworthy: The jackknife riffs of "Sparta #2" are downright vicious, and "The Past" is a nifty slice of techno-punk. (TM)

Narnack, 381 Broadway, 4th Floor, Sulte 3, New York 10013 www.narnackrecords.com/

Fall Of The Bastards - Dusk Of An Ancient Age, CD

Great American black metal with death metal's staple guttural vocals thrown in for good measure. Melody makes an appearance every once in awhile, but wisely steps aside when it's time to grind or get heavy. I could live without the four live tracks, but it's cool. Check this out! (DH) Intolerant Messlah, PO Box 6162 San Mateo, CA 94403, www.intolerantmesslah.com

Fallout, The - Turning Revolution Into Money, CD

It's always a pleasure to hear a great band that's been around for awhile that I've previously overlooked. This is the third full-length for Toronto's The Fallout, and it's one of the most kick-ass old-school punk albums I've heard in ages. Reminiscent of bands such as Stiff Little Fingers or The Clash, but

renewed to excise the dated elements and follies of some of those bands, The Fallout play earnest punk the old-fashioned way. While musically the band at times reminds me of The Spits, there's a surprising seriousness to this band's lyrics (mixing politics and diatribes about the punk scene), despite their fun, upbeat musical stylings. (AE)

Longshot Music, PMB #72, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.longshotmusic.com

P Fastbacks - Truth, Corrosion And Sour Bisquits, CD

It's hard for me to put into words the high regard in which I hold the Fastbacks, so let's just say that they were one of my favorite bands of all time. Truth, Corrosion And Sour Bisquits is a sort of odds-and-ends collection, compiling unreleased and "under-released" tracks. The packaging is worth mentioning: a beautiful digipack cover with tons of photos, in-depth liner notes and comments on each song by the band members. There are some choice rarities here, including tunes from hard-to-get tour-only singles, and a slight majority of the disc's 15 songs are covers (and who else but the Fastbacks could pull off covers of UK Subs and Elton John on the same album?). To me, the standout is "We Tried," from the band's final recording session in 2002. It's a wonderful pop song, as strong as anything the band released in the previous 20 years. But it's the chorus that really gets me: "was it fun, America?/ We tried." It was initially written as just another song for whatever the next record would be. By releasing it after the band ended, it becomes a sweet swan song and a fitting end to a terrific career. (JC) Book Records, www.bookrecords.com

Fighting Dogs - S/T, CD

Fast and growling hardcore that harkens back to the good ol' days. These guys aren't fooling around with any of that tech-metal experimentation or melodic emo crap. Just straight up, tried and true hardcore, fast and loud and simple. (MG)

Ed Walters Records, 11 S. 43rd St., Philadelphia, PA 19104-2901, www.edwaltersrecords.org

Filaments, The - ... What's Next, CD

Think early Rancid, Bombshell Rocks, Against All Authority and One Man Army rolled into one big, smoldering pile of punk-rock goodness. The trumpet/sax-ophone combo gives the songs that danceable quality, while the haggard vocals just smash you over the head. A diamond in the rough, for sure. (BN) Household Name, PO Box 12286, London, SW9 6FF, UK www.householdnamerecords.co.uk

Fireworks Go Up! - You're Welcome, CD

Fireworks Go Up! definitely went to the Death Cab For Cutie school of rock, which is fine by me. You're Welcome features 10 finely crafted, driving pop songs from Dan Coutant (formerly of post-hardcore band Joshua) and company. (JG)

Baryon Records, www.baryonrecords.com

First Aid Kit - Frights + Shivers, CD

This New England band's debut starts off with promise. Their jarring guitars and halting stop-go method seems to pick up where At The Drive-In left off. The first four tracks are killer, but then it's downhill, with slower songs that drag. Disappointingly, they never find their way back. (MP)

Said Sew Records, 10 Harvest Lane, FarmIngton, CT 06032, www.saidsew.com

Flakes, The - Straight Jacket, 7"

Are all Swedish bands awesome, or just the handful we hear about in America? These three songs are sugary pop punk, catchy as the flu, and although you'll be compelled to play them over and over, they'll be stuck in your head even if you hear them just once. More, please!

Black Juju Records, c/o Gunnarsson, Platensgatan 5B, 582 20 Linköping, Sweden, www.come.to/blackjuju; Evergreen Terrace Records, Wahlbergsgatan 10, 121 38 Johanneshov, Sweden, www.evergreenterrace.se

Flesh, The - Sweet Defeat, CDEP

What separates The Flesh from the majority of their indie-disco peers is their exertion of sheer musical and songwriting talent. While countless Brooklyn acts mask their lacking abilities with elaborate haircuts, falsified on-stage mania and nuclear hype, The Flesh's music does the damage in of itself. The machine is glued together by drummer Gregory Rogrove, who accents heavily on the upbeat, while singer and guitarist Nathan Halpern swoons like a preacher above wailing shoot-out salsa guitars, syncopated bass grooves and sticky sweet keys. Combining the varying elements of hip hop, disco and soul, the quartet prevails where most others fail, succeeding in bringing lava-hot dance fever into the arena of evolved punk rock. Nicely done.(BM)

Gern Blandsten Records, PO Box 356, River Edge, NJ 07661, www.gernblandsten.com

Flying Worker, The - A Collection, CD

This sounds like a lot of other hardcore, "screamo" metal punk bands; The lyrics are all screamed (making them impossible to understand without reading the liner notes), but the music is melodic. Although I didn't think this was bad, it wasn't different enough to be memorable. (JJG)

Electric Human Project, c/o Mike Haley, 500 S. Union St., Wilmington, DE 19805,

www.electrichumanproject.com

Food For Animals – Scavengers, CD

Bizarre hip-hop from DC with insane beats and a strong political agenda. As this is a very dense release, I'm glad that the total playing time is only about 20 minutes. Worth checking out if you're getting bored with Anticon or Mush and can handle lots of noisy production. (DH)

Upper Class Recordings, 590 Broadway Ave., Toronto, ON M4G 2S5, Canada, www.upperclass.to

Four Eyes, The − Rock & Role Playing, CD

Too much of my youth is being mocked on this disc for my liking with these 14 nerdy tracks by longtime Sacto punkers. This disc reminds me of playing D&D in sixth grade while listening to the Dead Milkmen. No other band has written a song about painting little lead miniatures, but the line "It's hard to paint their eyes/ I think that orc is almost dry" is still making me laugh and cry. When you have been together for a long time as a band, a few things happen. The Four Eyes have things going for them: They are tight musically, and their songs obviously have been fine-tuned in their structure. It's high praise for a band that plays silly songs, but it's warrant-

Reviewer Spotlight: Julie Gerstein (JG)

Superchunk, Foolish. The thing about Superchunk's break-up record, Foolish, is that it's hard not to wonder what poor Laura Ballance was thinking as she played along to 12 wretchedly angsty tracks about her breakup with Superchunk front-dude Mac McCaughan. But, as they say (and whoever they are certainly never had to play bass on an ex-boyfriend's "fuck you" record), there is beauty in pain, and Foolish is a perfectly crafted journey through the stunning end and aftermath of a relationship. I know it must sound like I'm such a morbid fucker, month after month writing about all these great break-up records, but my oeuvre, my specialty, happens to be mid-'90s indie rock, and if it wasn't about make-ups, records and bands, usually ended up in break-ups. Tracks like, "Why Do You Have To Put A Date On Everything?" and "Driveway To Driveway" amplify the lilting sadness and struggle of a dwindling partnership. And while it's true that Superchunk's gone on to release at least a half dozen more full-lengths since, not one has resonated so clearly with the collective consciousness as Foolish did so many years ago.

Reading and listening: So long Gravity's Rainbow, hello Underworld, by Don Delillo; everything by singer/songwriter/harpist Joanna Newsom.

Reviewer Spotlight: Jason Gooder (JJG)

NoMeansNo, Wrong. I rediscovered this cassette recently while cleaning my room and gave it a listen. This is my second copy of this 1989 album, the first lost due to my wonton disorganization and general slovenliness. When I first heard NoMeansNo, specifically the song "Rags And Bones" off this album, I thought it was one of the greatest songs I had ever heard. Of course, with the passage of time and exposure to more music, I wasn't sure if Wrong would still hold up. I was surprised to find that I liked it even more than I used to, and the songs that I used to skip over were worth a listen. I listened to it three times in a row all the way through and didn't find myself bored. The songs range from quasi-death metal "It's Catching Up" to straight up barre-chord punk rock "Oh No! Bruno!" to the blues-inflected punk of "Rags And Bones" to other genre-blurring songs with jazz-influenced noodling. The lyrics are intelligent, with a strong undercurrent of black humor. Wrong managed to be progressive without going into the vomit-inducing realm of prog rock. This band, composed of the Wright brothers (two real brothers who do bass, drums and vocals) are still going strong 25 years after starting. Some of their later albums have been mediocre, but this gem is a great introduction to the cult of NoMeansNo.



ed. "Hat Nerd" spent time on Dr. Demento's show, and after one listen you will fall in love with The Four Eyes. Thanks for the trip down my pathetic preteen years. (EA)

Plastic Idol Records, www.plasticidolrecords.com

Freeway Jackals / The Hollywoods - split, 7"

Freeway Jackals play fierce psychobilly at top volume and amazing speed. This female-fronted band out of Sweden rocks! The Hollywoods' surf-garage isn't quite as inspiring, though their instrumental version of The Misfits' "Angel Fuck" is good for a once-around thrill. (AJ)

45 Records, fourty5records@hotmail.com; Black Juju Records, c/o Gunnarsson, Platensgatan 5B, 582 20 Linköping, Sweden, www.come.to/blackjuju

Frenetics, The - Grey Veins To The Parking Lot, CD

The second album from the Canadian-bred act is full of scrappy pop-punk. This is a solid collection, and The Frenetics show more variety than most bands in the genre, with emergency-vehicle guitars trading places with the occasional horn section. (TM)

Union 2112 Records 78 Rachel East Montreal, Quebec H2W 1C6, Canada,

From First To Last – Dear Diary, My Teen Angst Has A Bodycount, CD

These guys are rocking the sound mainstream radio is just now picking up on and that bands like Coheed And Cambria have been doing longer and better. You know the deal: accessible pop rock with metallic emo leanings, coated with a thick layer of polish and topped with sad, break-up lyrics. (KM) Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Full Speed Ahead - Born To Lose, CD

This record was ready to be released four years ago, but due to artwork (by pushead) complications, it didn't get released until after the band has broken up. It sucks too, because this CD is so great—total '80s skate thrash in the vein of Negative Approach, complete with a cover of Black Flag's "Depression." Ari Katz of Lifetime throws down some vocals on "Consume." Since breaking up, some of these guys started Let It Burn and Lord Sterling. Even though this came out a little late, it's still worthy of someday becoming a classic. High energy, great production, fist-flying choruses and killer artwork makes Born To Lose a necessary addition to your collection. (TK) Manic Ride Records, PO Box 42593, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.manicriderecords.com

Fully Down, The - No Fate...But What We Make For Ourselves, CD

At first listen, The Fully Down was little more than a straight-ahead melodic punk act with a penchant for some heavy-metal-like detours. But the young Canadians actually write intricate little songs, with sudden stops and directional shifts, and decent-enough solos. Lyrics, unfortunately, drift toward high-school schmaltz. (TM)

Pop Culture, 7326 Rideau Valley Drive, Kars, Ontario KOA 2EO, Canada, www.popcultrec.com

Fuzztones - Salt For Zombies, CD

Garage revivalists extraordinaire the Fuzztones have reformed (again) to bless the world with more reverb- and Hammond-organ-drenched, '60s style r'n'r. This is a must-have for fans of the awesome Nuggets collections, and that's without even mentioning guest appearances by members of the Electric Prunes and the Seeds. Sensational. (IC)

Sin Record Company, PO Box 782, Tujunga, CA 91043, www.fuzztones.net

Gerritt - Sails The Sea Of Displacement, 12" EP

This would have worked well as the soundtrack for the last time Gigeresque aliens cornered me on an abandoned spaceship. This is ambient and somehow suspenseful noise from the founder of the Misanthropic Agenda label. With metallic rattling and distant rumbles, these pieces emulate Einstürzende Neubauten, while remaining much sparser. (BA)

Dielectric Records, 472 1/2 Alcatraz Ave, Oakland, CA 94609, dielectricrecords.com

9 Ghost, The - This Pen Is A Weapon, CD

This is how post-punk should be: powerful, interesting, well-written, melodic yet noisy. Taking its cues from D.C., and Fugazi in particular, The Ghost plays angular, relatively screamy rock that incorporates D.C.'s sound without simply repeating what we've all heard ("Banished And Loving It," "The Skin We Shed Has Stories To Tell"). Lyrically the band imbuse a call to arms in practically every song. There's a positive feeling to it, though it occasionally comes across as preachy ("A Letter From God"). Regardless, this is well-done. A million bands have been inspired by bands like Fugazi, but a precious few have been able to do something constructive and genuine with that inspiration. Other bands should study *This Pen Is A Weapon* to hear the way it should be done. If there's any justice in this scene, The Ghost will get their due. (KR)

Some Records, 345 7th Ave., 24th Floor, New York, NY 10001, www.some.com

🦻 Giant Sand - Is All Over...The Map, CD

Giant Sand from Tucson returns with his 14th album, and that's not including all of his collections and his bootleg series. I say "his" because Giant Sand is essentially Howe Gelb with a rotating cast of band members. For years, John Convertino and Joey Burns of Calexico backed him up, and on his last album, PJ Harvey and Neko Case, among others, provided vocals. If you've been following Giant Sand, here's another solid album. In fact, I think it's his best in some time, and it is "all over the map" with spaghetti western touches, flophouse piano and backyard country rock. Here, steel guitars play well with distorted guitars. Two versions of an excellent song, "Classico," frame the album, where Gelb captures the current politico-terrorist atmosphere, complaining that "Now the news is a yelling at me/ they're confused and telling me 'another bomb's going to blow/ it's become so classico." The Sex Pistols also get the Giant Sand treatment with a brief cover of "Anarchy In

Freeway Jackals / the Good Life

The U.K." More than just another strong addition, this album would also make a fine introduction to his discography. (BA)

Thrill Jockey Records, Box 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

But does she waste alcohol on stage, for effect, the way Karen O does? Can The Gin Palace's Meaghan Wilkie cry at the microphone for a video shoot? I think she's probably more Jim Morrison than O, giving life to her skin and a bonfire to her senses. She'd be too tough to cry, as evidenced on these seven songs of dark, cool art-punk, and her lyrical bitchiness are good for business. (SM)

Artrocker Records, 3A Highbury Crescent, London, N5 1RN, UK www.artrocker.com

Glass Candy - S/T, 7"

I don't know if they're actually German or if they've just mastered the art of the well-placed umlaut, but this band will make you shake your dark booty all over der kammer with their avant-garde up-tempo sock hop from hell. (DAL)

Release The Bats Records, c/o Matthias Anderrsson, Tellusgatan 22, 4:e Vån, 415 19 Göteborg, Sweden, www.releasethebats.com

9 Goatsnake - Trampled Under Hoof, CDEP

This is five-song EP (with two covers) was recorded over three years by this heavy-metal super group composed of former members of Kyrus, Obsessed, Scream and Wool. I forget that Wool's Pete Stahl was in a heavy-metal band before. His vocals on these doomish, syrupy songs are rich and full, and he isn't afraid to hit the high notes. I especially liked the remake of the early St. Vitus song "Burial At Sea." Check out the double-bass drum solo at the five-minute mark because it will blow your mind. Goatsnake is definitely not like Brian Baker's Junkyard band, so Scream fans can relax. (DI)

Southern Lord Records, PO Box 291967, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.southernlord.com

Gone Without A Trace - S/T, CD

Straightforward metal-core with a couple of tech-metal riffs thrown in. Plenty of throaty growls to chant along with while spin-kicking your mom's lamp across the living room. Then plenty of double-kick-drum breakdowns so you can pick up the broken pieces while you are "picking up change." (TK) Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, www.thorprecords.com

There's something in the water out in Omaha. It's something that leaves the inhabitants unable to have happy, healthy relationships, but gives them the ability to spin the misery into damn fine songs. This side project Cursive's Tim Kasher has created a masterpiece of love, jealousy, betrayal and the collapse of a relationship. Each song, dominated by an alt-country, clanky style, tells of a different stage in this relationship. The simple, yet beautiful, songs entice you and leaving you wanting to know what

Reviewer Spotlight: Emily Hausman

Hose Got Cable, Majesty. My friend let me borrow this album about a year ago, and I haven't been able to give it up since. This is definitely a band everyone should know about, and not many people do. Majesty is mathy and sinister, straight-forward and hard-hitting. HGC has a thunderous rhythm section, and through all the noise there is an underlying simplicity. This album is full of time changes, insistent lyrics and great beats. Noisy and spastic yet well crafted and thoughtful, this album quickly turned from something that I liked into something that I love. I really can't believe more people aren't into this band. I still wonder to this day why my friend hasn't begged for this album back because I certainly wouldn't want to go almost a year without hearing it. The best thing about this record is the fact that anyone can find something they like about this album, whether you are into hardcore, emo, indie or whatever. It jumps across musical boundaries and doesn't fall into one category. Honestly, one of my favorite records.

This is what it sounds like when doves cry: Angel Hair, Pregnant With The Senior Class, Big Black, Hammer Party, Boilermaker, Leucadia, Shellac, Terraform, Kissing Tigers, Summer 2003 Tour EP.

Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer (DH)

Morbid Angel, Blessed Are The Sick. First, a little history. Morbid Angel came onto the scene in the late '80s with founding member Trey Azagthoth on guitar and an album named Abominations Of Desolation on the shelves. After a major line-up change (including snagging the rhythm section from ground-breaking hardcore/grind outfit Terrorizer), the band re-recorded many of the songs from the aforementioned album and released it as Altars Of Madness. Two years after Altars, the band recorded Blessed. Their first with the same line-up and a clean slate, the Terrorizer influence really began to shine through with completely crushing production, an obvious hardcore influence, and the realization that Azagthoth was on his way to being one of the most innovative songwriters in death metal. Sure, the record is fast, but Azagthoth managed to accomplish what most death-metal guitarists cannot: interesting riffs underneath all of the chaos. Rather than a wall of fuzzed out speed-picking, Blessed is to riffs what any all-star game is to sports: a showcase of the finest, an attempt to best all peers with the absolute top that they have to offer. Blessed succeeds wildly in every category imaginable, from the drum work of now legendary Pete Sandoval to David Vincent's lyrics, which are a great example of the period's Satanic tendencies. Also, I feel the need to give credit to Richard Brunelle (who left the band after this record was complete) for his ability to keep up with Azagthoth on the solo front. Not their biggest success commercially, but one of my all-time favorites without question.

Thorss to lance your every word: Not Enough Gold, Dema, Kanye West, The College Dropout; Edan, Primitive Plus, Necrophagist, Epitaphr, Micranots, Farward EP.

happens next as the main characters move closer to destruction. More than an album, Kasher has created a rock soap opera, full of melodrama and regret, which leaves the listener addicted and reliving memories of yore. "Album Of The Year," "Under A Honeymoon," "Lovers Need Lawyers" and "Inmates" help make the album so powerful. I'm sorry for Kasher and the girl, but as a result The Good Life has created a classic break-up record, and we can all feel their pain. (MP)

Saddle Creek, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554, www.saddle-creek.com

9 Gorge Trio - Open Mouth, O Wisp, CD

The fourth track, "Words," includes none—these are all instrumental pieces. Recorded over a three years, the Gorge Trio has created a package of stimulating eruptions that clock in mostly at a minute and a half. The excellent opening track has piano, mathy guitar precision and propulsive drumming that's reminiscent of some Gastr del Sol or Storm and Stress. It's followed by a 10-second track of electronic scratches, if that gives you an idea of its range. Other instruments are incorporated into the mix, such as flute, koto, vibraphone and glockenspiel. These guys have been or are members of Deerhoof, The Flying Luttenbachers, Iceburn and Sicbay—all members but one of Colossamite. Some tracks, though, can get jammy with uninteresting riffs, but the bulk of this is solid experimental candy. (BA)
Skin Graft Records, PO Box 27346, Chicago, IL 60625, www.skingraftrecords.com

Government Issue - G.I.'s First Demo, 7"

I'm a big Gl fan, but rereleases like this one (like Minor Threat's demo rerelease) are just for hard-core fans. Featuring 10 songs, this is straight-up early '80s hard-core that betrays no hint of what Gl would eventually become. It's always interesting to hear bands' roots, but this one's for Gl nerds only. (KR) Spontaneous Combustion Records, www.spontaneous.com

Grackles, The - Honeypot, CD

Although they openly cite Nirvana and the Pixies as primary influences, The Grackles' songwriting is far more docile than their heroes'. 1993 definitely comes to mind, but instead of bipolar punk and bossanova beauty, I'm hearing countless Superchunk replicas and watered down grunge-pop radio hits. (BM) Self-released, www.thegrackles.com

Green, Christina – Mindless Fun, CD

Australian Christina Greens' offbeat, folk-inspired songs are delivered with a theatrical approach, both musically and lyrically. Although the album does sound different than your run-of-the-mill singer/songwriter production, it still doesn't incite the listener to want to hear it more than once. (AJA)

Self-released, www.christinagreen.wild.net.au

S Green Chair, The - Michaelangelo, CD

It took a few listens to get over the shitty four-track recording and see the genius behind these 11 off-key fuzzy pop songs. It sounds like Chuck Keller

was listening to a lot of British Invasion bands while writing these songs. The production is at bare minimum, but every song has a hook that you can't shake, with quirky, fun lyrics. The song that has been sticking in my head for the past two weeks is the last song, "Paris Is Empty," which is a little depressing, but it's so fucking good. If you can get past the lo-fi recording, this is highly recommended. (TK)

Prison Jazz Records, 431 Birch St, Scranton, PA 18505, www.prisonjazz.com

9 Gris Gris, The - S/T, CD

They call it "psych rock" for a reason, and it isn't just for the organ solos and sonic guitars. Take Oakland, Calif.'s The Gris Gris. Directed by Texas transplant Greg Ashley, The Gris Gris' debut carries the same impact and creativity of '60s folk psychedelic, but sounds fueled more by mind-altering emotions than mind-altering substances. Meaning these guys know when to actually end a song. Each of the album's tracks reveals secrets and stories of bitterness/fear and love/lust that are this meandering movie's still frames. Driving the melodies are the guitars that never sleep, Oscar Michel's minimalist, clever bass lines and Joe Haener's agile drums. Meanwhile, Ashley's voice echoes out from inside the cave created by his own telekinetic songwriting style of using his intuitive energy to compose tracks that meld moods in the willing mind of the listener—from the trebled out garage sound of "Necessary Separation" to the manic, distorted "Everything" to the Nick Drake-esque ballad, "Me Queda Um Bejou." By far, the best and most intriguing soundtrack for your next near nervous breakdown. (CC)

The Birdman Recording Group, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.thebirdmangroup.com

Hair Police, The - Obedience Cuts, CD

This record is not music, but a creative sound collage. Parts of it sound like someone is getting murdered with the drill at the dentist, other like '60s sci-fi movies. You wouldn't put this in to rock, but if you really like noise, you will like this. (EH)

Freedom From, PO Box 582391, Minneapolis, MN, 55458, www.freedom-from.com

Hanalei – We Are All Natural Disasters, CD

The Ghost's Brian Moss (who's also a PP reviewer) yearns for a simpler life, and he's starting with this CD. Hanalei is his acoustic solo project, but there are electronic touches here and there that add nice layers to the songs. Moss explores his singer/songwriter alt-country side, especially "Anza Ninety Three," which reminds me of Drag The River. The overall result is folksy, catchy and smartly written—almost *too* smartly written, as in opener "Action Drum." Moss has a lot to say, and the lyrical delivery occasionally sounds rushed because of it. By the 11th and final track, the CD feels a bit long, but its roughly 49 minutes are strong nevertheless. While wishing for a simpler life (in Oregon, Colorado or Tennessee, as in "Better Days") or being freaked out by inching ever closer to 30 aren't new subjects, Hanalei's

delivery and lyrical strength give them a fresh coat of paint ("Anza Ninety Three," "John Hughes Endings"). Recommended. (KR)
Thick Records, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622, www.thildrecords.com

P Hawks And Snakes - Tame Out The Spell, CD

Those who were depressed when Guided By Voices announced plans to call it quits will want to track down this foursome's debut. Michigan's Hawks And Snakes mix Io-fi basement recordings with ol' fashioned Midwestern power pop. The album lacks a killer hook, but Tyler Blakslee is having a blast, especially when he's warning the boys that girls will "kill us with hugs." He's rocking against the cuddle, and for that he at least deserves a pint. (TM) Down Peninsula Audio 663 Prentis #2, Detroit, MI 4821, www.downpeninsula.com

Hellacopters, The - By The Grace Of God, CD

I have seen the Hellacopters before, and they made my ears ring for about three days. They were a great live band, and *Supershitty To The Max* was a pretty good album, with fast punk combined with some semi-dirgy metal and glam rock. The new Hellacopters aren't anything like the old Hellacopters, except they both like self-aggrandizing guitar solos. I heard their last album, *Grande Rock*, and it sounded too much like '70s arena rock. The new Hellacopters are even worse—they could be Journey. In addition, the band's press company kept insisting this was one of the greatest rock albums of all time. (JJG)

Liquor and Poker Music, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250, www.liquorandpokermusic.com

Hells, The - S/T, CDEP

A band out of the UK who combines '70s hard-rock riffs with the amphetamine-injected guitars of Drive Like Jehu. A solid EP that should provide a quick fix for Todd Rundgren-esque Anglophiles and fans of The Kills. (RL) Artrocker Records, 3A Highbury Crescent, London, NS TRN, UK www.artrocker.com

Hero And The Victor, The - Snapshots From A Warehouse, CDEP

Fast and loose post-punk that, in its effort to both do some damage and construct melodies, succeeds in making good parts of songs. The familiarity of the vocals stands out from the music, as well as does those noticeable parts. I liked it at times, but it could benefit from some simplification. (AJA)

Self-released waw that your

Higgins++ - Commercial Break, CD

Higgins++ is one man, Andy Higgins, singing personal and political punk tunes with nothing to back him up except a single distorted, electric guitar. It's interesting to hear this style without the use of drums and bass, and for that reason this stands out. However, it's not my cup of tea. (KM) JSNTGM, PO Box 1025, Blackpool FY3 0FA, UK, www.jsntgm.com

Review Spotlight: Don Irwin (DI)

Death Angel, The Ultra-Violence. Seeing Death Angel energetically perform these songs live recently reassured me that this was a great record and a great band. Sure things have changed in the 17 years since the record was released by these five Filipino cousins from the Bay Area. What makes The Ultra-Violence still relevant? With songs like "Thrashers," "Evil Priest" and "Mistress of Pain," you'd expect this teenage angst to get tiresome. It doesn't. The songs are created so wonderfully that it's like listening to a Beethoven symphony. Kirk Hammett (Metallica) produced Death Angel's first demo, which the song "The Ultra Violence" appeared on. Davy Vain, who ended up working on Christina Aguilera's recent Stripped record, was behind the boards in '87. Listening to Ride The Lightning or Master Of Puppets, you might hear some similar styles. After hearing one of Metallica's old songs on the radio, I am convinced that Mark Osegueda has a much better voice than James Hetfield. Clocking in at 10 minutes, the title track is a marathon in its own right. Dueling guitarists Rob and Gus trade off solos, and each lead solo has its own special touch on the fretboard. The only other time I saw Death Angel was around 1990, when there was a stupid fight involving the opening band and the bouncers at the Country Club in Reseda, Calif. That ruined a historic moment in my life, which was finally remedied recently.

Now playing: Beastie Boys, To The 5 Boroughs, Fugazi, Live Series 9.3.97, Buzzin Fly Volume One, featuring Ben Watt, Wooly Mammoth/Hidden Hand- Split 12"; Modest Mouse, Him, Mice Parade and any double drum band live.

Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

Bob Dylan, Highway 61 Revisited. It wasn't until I reached my early 20s that I was able do away with my preconceived notions of Bob Dylan and give his work a chance. Highway 61 Revisited is the album that finally made me a fan. I grew up in a home where Bob Dylan was a saint, an icon of the '60s Civil Rights era and all the baggage that carried with it. As a teenager I dismissed him as a funny-haired, harmonica-tooting hippie who moaned nonsensical nursery rhymes. Somewhere down the line, I began to hear his music in films and cover versions of his stuff by artists I considered "cool." So I dug up some of my mom's old vinyl and discovered this album. For whatever reason, she'd mostly played his acoustic stuff for me when I was a kid—"Times They Are A Changin," etc.—so it was a revelation to hear his electric stuff. Yeah, I'd heard "Like A Rolling Stone," the opening track on Highway, before, but it didn't stick. Upon re-examination, the song's story of desperation, loss and disillusion made perfect sense. The same with "Ballad Of A Thin Man." The tracks that really knocked me out were the lesser known "From A Buick 6" (an up-tempo blues stomp about a "junk-yard angel" who's "bound to put a blanket" on her ramblin' man's death bed), and the shuffling, slide guitar-driven title track that mixes biblical and historical references into lyrics about a crossroads haven for troubled souls.

Been listening to: insane amounts of The Rolling Stones. Mostly: Tattoo You, the Fort Worth Express live bootleg from '73, Some Girls, Let It Bleed and Love You Live.



High Water Marks, The - Songs About The Ocean, CD

This is jangling and droning indie-pop from members of Apples In Stereo, Palermo and Preston School Of Industry. Tunes range from light and bouncy summertime joyfulness to moping and melancholic. To quote Abraham Lincoln, "People who like this sort of thing will find this the sort of thing they like." (JC)

Eenle Meenie Records, PO Box 691397, Los Angeles, CA 90069, www.eeniemeenie.com

Hinderlandt / Zu / Can Can Heads - Eccentrics Issue One, split CD

All three bands have a similar avant-garde, experimental feel. The bands go from electronic to free jazz to just plain noisy rock. This album gets to be repetitive at times; at first it's intriguing, but by the end you're pretty disinterested. (FH)

Tenzenmen, www.ten-zen-men.com

Holy Fire, The - S/T, EP

Sean Hoen, formerly of hardcore standout Thoughts Of lonesco, has moved on to a more subdued, yet equally intense sound here. With precise instrumentation and mature arrangements, The Holy Fire incorporates catchy pop hooks, crunchy guitar riffs and mathy rhythms into a moody post-punk base à la The Cure. Thoroughly impressive. (LW)

Down Peninsula Audio, 24830 Newton, Dearborn, MI 48124, www.downpeninsula.com

Hot Cross - Fair Trades And Farewells, CDEP

This looks and sounds really fashionable. With lots of complex rhythms and individual notes on the guitar, it has influences from the DC and San Diego emo scenes. The guitar playing just kills it for me. I can dig some of this genre, but it's just too dean for me. (DA)

Level-Plane, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

Hot Damn! - The Girl Can't Help It, CD

After six years, the sexiest band on the planet is back with their third fulllength. It features 13 fuzzy, sleazy punk tunes in just under a half an hour, the best being the cover of "Short Shorts," complete with saxophones! (TK) Steel Cage Records, PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125, www.steekagerecords.com

Howards Alias - The Answer Is Never, CD

Emotional ska with the lead singer of The Faint on vocals (not really). The only brief (*extremely* brief) moment of joy I got from this record was when I learned the horn section learned how to play their instruments listening to eight-bit Nintendo games. (RL)

Household Name, PO Box 12286 London SW9 6FE, UK, www.householdnamerecords.co.uk

How do you follow up the crazy debut *Yes No Shut In*, an album that made me want to put a fist through glass or smash my television. Frankly, at

times I can't stand to put a Hunches record on, while other times I need that abrasion. Their sophomore effort *Hobo Sunrise* may not be as crazy and harsh, but this is no Simon And Garfunkel, either. Fourteen tracks this time around, and it is quite a task to make it through them. Is that a bad thing? Again, the Hunches are a love 'em or hate 'em kinda band. There are moments of peace buried among the chaos. I would love to see this fellows live; I'm sure they fuck shit up to say the least. Birthday Party, Pussy Galore and Velvet Underground all come to mind. If you didn't dig their debut due to its large amount of noise, then you may enjoy the better, more crafty *Hobo Sunrise*. Let's see what their third effort may bring, if they make it that far. (EA)

In The Red Records, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.intheredrecords.com

I Walk The Line - Badlands, CD

Finnish pop punk with rocking Farfisa organs and a lot of energy, sorta like a completely cute and poppy version of the Murder City Devils with a Finnish accent. Not my thang, but worth checking out for all you poppunkers. (MG)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19, 2WB, UK, , www.bosstuneage.com

If One Should Fall - On Deaf Ears, CD EP

I feel bad for friends who give these guys shows at their various parties. Having to say, "Definitely! We'll have to do this again!" must be extremely hard to do. The furthest these emo-metalists should get from their garage is the mailbox to keep up on the "help wanted" section. (SM)

Mohawk Trail Records, 410 Liberty St., Lansing, MI 48906, mohawktrailrecords@yahoo.com

Sometimes it's a mistake even to try to read the press releases sent with music—they can turn me against a band even before I've heard them. In this case, I am told the album *The Exorcist* "flows out of the speakers and into your brain, flipping your switches and leaving their mark..." and the singer "started her musical career in the '90s, founding indie mainstays New Radiant Storm King..." (Who?) I don't like to be told how music will affect me, that the singer was in an important group (that I have never heard of) or that she has photos in the Museum of Modern Art. (What does that have to do with her music?) The album is inoffensive, Io-fi, slightly Breeders-esque, but not searing into my brain or flipping any switches. (UJG)

Too Pure/Beggars Group, 625 Broadway, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10012, www.toopure.com, www.beggars.com/us

9 Impractical Cockpit / Nuclear Family - split, 12"

The relationship of the cockpit to its practicality is irrelevant, but the irrelevance of this band's often slavishly poetic lyrics—sung by a man who may have left the filling of a cavity prematurely—and industrial clang-ten accompaniment are very G. Side B's Nudear Family do the false-start type

the High Water Marks / Incision

of rock that peppers guitar solos all over the melodies and attempts to be avant garde with disturbingly plain standard time signatures. (SM)
Friends and Relatives, PO Box 23, Bloomington, IN 47402, www.friendsandrelativesrecords.com

In Fervor - Anatomy Of A Memory, CDEP

More of a new Seattle sound than old Seattle. In it are traces of Alice In Chains, but only if they were influenced by the singer-songwriters. Richard Martin is a softer Layne Staley, and fervor is kept pretty tame unless Will Johnson is your idea of a hellraiser. (SM)

Self-released, www.Infervor.com

🤊 In Ink Please / The Foliage — How To Make Better Love, CD

Reminiscent of indie-pop duo Mates Of State, In Ink Please have a way about their easy on the ears, guitar-driven pop that is both infecting and, though oxymoronic, delightfully sickening. The pair of vocals really blend well together, and the apparent strain in lead Vanessa Palmer's voice is thankfully not overdone. Some of the lyrics ("just my skin/ that's holding all my heartbeats in") mimic a Ben Gibbard (Death Cab For Cutie) inclination toward melodramatic minutiae, but, as with Gibbard, the lyrics fit the music and are lovely to sing along to. The second band on this split EP, the Foliage, choose a less poppy route, dabbling in post-rock and low-key indie rock that is folksy in its minimalism. Shifting gears toward album's end, they slow things down considerably, stretching their last song to epic length. However, for fans of the above-mentioned bands, this EP is worth a listen. (AJA)

Fall Records, PO Box 20886, Baltimore, MD 21209, www.fallrecords.com

In Passing - Look Alive, CD

Featuring ex-members of other snooze-worthy bands as Underoath and Anberlin, In Passing's *Look Alive* sounds like another bunch of nice enough guys playing nonthreatening, "heartfelt" rock music. For those of you who didn't get your fill of Fairweather back in 2000, now's your chance to cash in. Look alive indeed, my friends. (MS)

Indianaola Records, 649 S. Henderson Rd., Apt. B106, King of Prussia, PA 19406,

In Praise Of Folly – The Present Age, CD

This uninteresting debut blends shoegazing and sadcore by channeling My Bloody Valentine and Built To Spill musically and Jeff Buckley vocally. The indistinguishable songs seem to drag. This album left me bored, and I wouldn't recommend it. (MP)

Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Dr., Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Incision - Revealed And Worshipped, CD

Fairly standard death metal, down to the growling and barking. Really technical musicianship, but my metal line gets drawn at thrash unless it

Reviewer Spotlight: Scott Jones (SJ)

Buzzcocks, A Different Kind Of Tension. When I was in high school, my English teacher gave us an assignment to pick any song that represented what we believed in. So I picked "I Believe" from A Different Kind of Tension to share with the class. What the hell was I thinking?! Pete Shelly sings, "I believe in the final solution" and then repeats "There is no love in this world anymore" over and over again. Oh well, it's still a good song. The first side of the album is much like any other early Buzzcocks record, except the very unexpected chord change that starts out the first song, "Paradise." This acts almost as a premonition of what's to come on side two. Things start to get weird on "Hollow Inside," where Shelly tells us in no uncertain terms that we are all "Hollow inside, but we couldn't find out what the reason was." Next the title track gives us many contradictory commands, sometimes even in the voice of the Silons from Battlestar Galactica. (Anyone remember the Silons?) The song reaches a peak when the contrasting words are sung simultaneously creating, well, tension. Finally after the cool insanity of "I Believe" we get a snippet of "Everybody's Happy Nowadays", bringing us back to Earth.

More good shit, Maynard: Subhumans, Live In A Dive, Voivod, War And Pain, Tremendous Fucking, How's My Fucking?, Dropkick Murphys, Blackout, Grimple, S/T.

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

Teengenerate, Smash Hits. This record is a collection of singles that were released throughout the span of Teengenerate's career. These guys, according to the liner notes, were a huge inspiration to a lot of up-and-coming Japanese bands today. Even though Fifi denies it in an interview with Firestarter (the band that formed soon after Teengenerate broke up) in MaximumRockNRoll, I can definitely see how it could be possible. They play some driving and noisy punked up garage music that is addictive as hell. In this collection, there are a number of covers, and my favorites are of The Nervous Eaters' "Just Head," The Zeros' "Wild Weekend" and Radio Birdman's "Burn My Eye." The raw energy that Teengenerate captures, even when playing other people's songs, makes the songs their own. What else can I say about a band that revolutionized noisy garage punk in my life? These guys are amazing. Check out their two other full-lengths, Get Action, Audio Recording and 10" Let's Go To The Top on various different labels. Teengenerate is a band that shouldn't be overlooked. Speaking of which, Fifi, Fink, and Sammy (3/4 of Teengenerate) are in the band Firestarter. Keep an eye out for their records out on Mangrove Records.

Recently hearing: Marked Men, S/T; Squirrel Bait, Skag Heaven (reissue); The Futures, Electric Wave From The Underworld; Goblin, Hits, Rare Tracks, And Outtakes 1975-1989; and a Belltones tape that one of my cool customers gave me. The Belltones rule!

Impractical Cockpit / LP

really stands out. Sometimes I've been known to listen to a little Emperor as well, but death metal just isn't scary enough for me I guess. (TK)

Earache Records, 2nd Floor, 43 West 38th St., New York, NY 10018, www.earache.com

Impractical Cockpit - Poverty Is Violence, 12"

Well, I have to give it up for these guys in terms of originality: trumpets, drum machines, weird samples, random sounds, even garbage cans. It's experimental in the most extreme sense with horribly off-key vocals. Overall, it just ended up sounding like four-track experiments put to vinyl. (KM) Impractical Cockpit, PO Box 52096, New Orleans, LA 70152

Irradio – Make-up For The Inaugurated, CD

It's like they threw all their ideas, from carnivalesque noodle rock to ska, against the wall just to see what sticks. Sometimes it really comes together, but then it gets chaotic again, and this band demonstrates in the last half of the album that they can do better than chaos. (DAL)

Grey Flight, 16458 Bolsa Chica St., #409, Huntington Beach, CA 92649, www.greyflight.com

Issue Sixteen - The Ghosts Are Bleeding, CD

The second full-length from the Canadian screamo act captures the best and worst of the genre. Passive-aggressive rants featuring overly poetic lyrics can be forgiven when they're accompanied with catchy shout-alongs. But when a song about infidelity is whispered over meandering guitar noodling, forgiveness is no longer an option. (TM)

New Romance for Kids Records 2405 Dézery Montreal, Quebec HTW ZS4, Canada, www.newromanceforkids.free.fr

Jakuta And Carl - Mistakes Were Made (Or How I Broke My Heart), 7"

Candy sweet like the Jolly Rancher red vinyl it's grooved onto. Silly, digitized, lo-fi love songs for those inclined toward the Smiths and/or a demented Man...Or Astro-man? thing. (AA)

Little Joe Peep Records. 3804 Sixth Road N., Arlington, VA 22203, www.ljp.hlinak.com

Japanische Kampfhorspiele – Fertigmensch, CD

I probably should have paid more attention in my three years of high school German. Oh, well. These guys play some off-the-wall hardcore/grind with moderate amounts of vocals. Twists and turns are a good thing when it comes to grindcore, and this band has 'em by the bucketful. (DH)

Bastardized Recordings, PO Box 200521, 56005 Koblenz, Germany,

www.bastardizedrecordings.de

Je Ne Sals Quoi, The - Secret Language, CDEP

It's here! The inevitable cross between '80s new-wave revival and emo!

And not a moment too soon! But the joke's on me—I like it! (JC)

Coalition, Newtonstraat Z12, 2562 KW, Den Haag, The Netherlands, www.coalition-records.com

Jed Whitey - Mongoloid Cage Match, CD

Jed Whitey has its roots in the '60s Detroit punk scene, like their Australian

forefathers 30 years ago, but it's generic to the core. I really only enjoyed the cover of Devo's "Uncontrollable Urge." I will hold onto this disc for their great version of one of my favorite songs. (EA)

Manic Ride Records, PO Box 42593, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.manicriderecords.com

JKPBombs - CDEP

Taken from band's fact sheet: "Influences: NOFX, Operation Ivy, The Suicide Machines...Less Than Jake...Blink 182." Sounds about right to me. No thanks. (RL) Elemblem Records, www.elemblem.com

🦻 Johnson, Will - Vultures Await, CD

There is no question that Will Johnson is a talent. The man has put out 10 albums in his eight-year career among his two bands, Centro-Matic and South San Gabriel and his solo projects, all of which have garnered critical acclaim. But his latest solo release doesn't manage to strike a chord. In fact, it's pretty dull. Mostly bare-bones, acoustic-guitar-driven alt-country, the fleshier moments are the most notable. Like "Just Some Silence," a self-doubting ballad that starts off simple and turns chill-inducing when swelling strings are brought in, or "Fly My Sweet Dove," which features a full band. Johnson's rough-hewn vocals are refreshing, but overall, the album is background music at best. (LW)

Misra 1405 Broadmoor Drive, Austin, TX 78773, www.misrarecords.com

Karst - Vision Of Insane Hope, CD

Heavy, evil music from Savannah, Ga., with Victoria, the singer from Damad on vocals. There's a lot of depth to these songs, complete with creepy background melodic moaning and witch-like cackling. Fans of hardcore, meta, and crust (especially Damad fans) should all get into this. (TK)

Hater of God. PO Box 666, Troy, NY 12181, www.haterofgod.com

Kervin - | Think | See Evil, CD

Kervin play hard rock/funk/rap with politically revolutionary lyrics—a sound that may have once been revolutionary but now is cliché. The guitar sound is so horrible it makes me feel like I'm in Guitar Center listening to all the wankers. (SJ)

Self-released, 35-42 28th St #2, Astoria, NY 11106, whoiskervin@hotmail.com

Kill The Hippies - Jerked Off By Strangers, 7"

It's easy to be cynical about a band whose members call themselves "PP envy," "Morte Treehorn" and "The MetroGnome," but Kill the Hippies play decent '77-style punk. Each track has its own sound, and though the alternating female and male vocals are inaudible, they fit the scrappy style. (LW) Self-released, 614 I/2 N. Mantua, Kent, OH 44240, www.killthehippes.db.net

There aren't that many females in punk rock bands, and there are fewer that get the attention they deserve. Immigrant Sun is giving this female-fronted post-hXc band the opportunity they deserve. These guys play some

pretty intense stuff that grooves, soothes and completely rocks it out. She sings her throat out, but never screams, and still has some range. She is equally backed by a completely tight unit made up of two guitars and double bass drums. This is very reminiscent of mid '90s post-hardcore, but it's not dated. I was really digging on this from the first listen, even though the cover, with some crazed bunny, is a bit misleading. The music makes up for it. This one is definitely worth checking out. (DM)

Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711 Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.lmmigrantsun.com

Kimono - Mineur-Aggressif, CD

Kimono's deeply webbed, trance-inducing, ethereal sounds are suitable for background setting, drug trips and dreamy sleep. The songs build beautifully, but often resolve into nothingness. Sharing the one time label of Björk and Sigur Ròs, keland's latest is steadily under way, yet nowhere near the monumental accomplishments of their peers. (BM)

Bad Taste / Smekkleysa, PO Box 1263, 121 Reykjavík, Iceland, www.smekkleysa.net

K.K. Rampage - Friend Face, CD

Here's a really good record from clamorous rock band out of Chicago that churns out disruptive riffs with a with psychedelic flairs to veg on. (BA)

Boron Recordings, boron.20m.com

Kopaz - Future Radiant Shine, CD

More Sunny Day Real Estate-derived indie rock. This record is just more of the insipid, predictable results you have come to expect from a genre that excites me as much as being called in on my day off of work. (RL)

We Want Action Records, 1510 Runaway Bay Drive, #2B, Columbus, OH 43204,

www.wewantaction.com

Kroko - Rabia, CD

Kroko's mind-fuck noise leaves your neurons bouncing off the back corners of your brain. The Finnish trio's base is in the darker elements of the finest prog rock, built on with a sinister sense for cacophonous instruments and the possible leading role of secondary sounds. At once, jarring and exquisite. (CC) Tenzenmen, www.ten-zen-men.com

Kultur Shock - Kulrura-Dicatura, CD

Joe Strummer would be proud of this genre-bending band based in the Pac NW and recorded by Jack Endino. The mix starts with Yugoslavian gypsy music and adds some experimental sounds with punk and hip-hop beats. The lyrics aren't in English and seem to indicate a left-leaning political stance and yearning for their homeland. (DI)

Koolarrow Records, 740A 14th St., San Francisco, CA 94114, www.koolarrow.com

🦻 L.P. - Suburban Sprawl & Alcohol, CD

Sort of a Sheryl Crow in tomboy attire, this 25-year-old singer-songwriter's heart is in the femme rock of the late 1970s. L.P.'s voice is the most ear-catching element of the release, at some points invoking the warble and

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Laidman (DAL)

Mission Of Burma, Peking Spring. Not just for the Mission Of Burma's self-titled 1979 EP with assorted other tracks recorded 1980-1982. It opens with "This Is Not A Photograph," which appears in a tighter version on Signals, Calls And Marches, but this messier take is worth hearing to get a different perspective on one of the greatest songs of all time. "Peking Spring" is just a downright epic, while "Dumbells" starts as an exercise in well-behaved noise that challenges the brain before breaking open into a soul-searing melody. "Dirt" is one of the loveliest indie-punk tunes ever scorched onto tape, and if it didn't bounce along with such driving force, I would almost call it a ballad. Man, I could lavish praise on each track, but the really important thing here is what holds it together. The songs here are varied and heterogeneous, but they all have some common elements that make this an essential record. They all have that challenging, kind of disconcerting spark where you think for a second they are going to be inaccessible noise-fests, but all of a sudden they've morphed into emotional, hook-laden slices of harmonic bliss.

Today the turntable spits out the annual summertime sampling of great old stuff: Jawbox, For Your Own Special Sweetheart, Pee-Chees, Games People Play, Rites Of Spring and Polvo.

Reviewer Spotlight: Ryan Leach (RL)

Joy Division, Les Bains Douches. Like Syd Barrett and Rocky Erickson, Joy Division has become highly mythologized to a devoted cult following. The template for Joy Division's enigmatic existence was cast long before the band broke up.

Utterly gifted people like Anton Corbijn, Martin Hannett and Peter Saville all played a role in steering an image that has now become, at times, completely foreign to the three surviving members. That said, what is often lost at the hands of myth-making is just how good Joy Division was as a live band. Where their studio albums demonstrate a subdued, mysterious ambiance, their live performances were utterly insane: Pete Hook's treble-drenched 4001 rips with complete abandonment. Keeping time, Stephen Morris' hi-hat rattles at a pulsating beat, conjuring up images of a speed freak with trashcan lids tied to his/her hands. Bernard Sumner's guitar floats in and out like a jazz horn player on junk.

All the while, lan Curtis sings like it's his last day on Earth. Les Bains Douches. It has been done to have been most casual enthusiast.

My neighbors hate me: The Riverboat Gamblers, Something To Crow About, The Riverboat Gamblers, S/T; The Detroit Cobras, Life, Love And Leaving, Compulsive Gamblers, Crystal Gazing/Luck Amazing, Lush, Lovelife.



wail of Gwen Stefani and at other moments the placidity and vulnerability of Stevie Nicks. But, while her voice is genuinely interesting, it would resonate better with a little less production. Although she sings her lyrics with gusto and spirit, they are often too repetitive and lacking in originality to induce real empathy from the listener. (LW)

Light Switch Records, www.lightswitchrecords.com

La Descente Du Coude - Croyez-Moi, Ça Fait Mal!, CDEP

These guys play really upbeat indie rock bordering on post-hardcore. Semi-hectic and spazzy, but kept together with a tight rhythm section and quick guitar bursts. The French (Canadian) lyrics give them an even more urgent sound, like they're berating you for being a *stupeed* American—which you are if you don't check these guys out. (NS)

Dare To Care, PO Box 463, Stn C, Montreal, QC, H2L 4K4, Canada, www.daretocarerecords.com

Landing - Sphere, CD

On their latest release, Landing presents psychedelic post-rock in the vein of Mogwai, but calmer. The band masters the use of distortion in all of their buildups, which are usually followed by a sweet melodic release. The occasional vocals blend in, adding to the richness. Very good indeed. (MP) K Records, Box 7154. Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecs.com

Launie Anderssohn - Dark Bleuge, CD

When did I lose my sense of musical humor? Juvenile sex talk by middle aged men has no appeal to me. This band has their chops down, and the keys drew me in with a wide range of sounds and musical styles. The only problem is the lyrics will make you want to upchuck. (DI) Self-released, launni@videotron.ca

Law Of All Ends – Forty Bones And Six Flights Of Stairs Later / Out-Stretched Hands Slit At The Wrist, 7"

This is a brutal six-song crust EP from lowa City, with a full two-guitar sound, peak levels of musicianship and tightly edited lyrics. I imagine the kids go apeshit when they play live, because they're a 9.5 out of 10 on the aggress-o-meter. (AE)

Self-released, 1127 Franklin St., Iowa City, IA 52240, www.lawofallends.com

Le Scrawl - Eager To Please, CDEP

I can't stop laughing when I listen to these guys. Imagine if grind kings Agothocles mixed in the ska, surf and jazz creativity of Mr. Bungle. It sounds as rad as it does ridiculous. This is some extremely creative shit. They need / deserve to be heard. (TK)

Life Is Abuse, PO Box 20524, Oakland, CA 94620, www.lifeisabuse.com

Leaving Rouge - White Horses, CDEP

Despite being a five-song EP, this seemed to last forever—and not in a good

way. White Horses is derivative, Creed-like arena rock. Repeated listening only solidified that fact. Save yourself the trouble and pass this one up. (MP) Down Peninsula Audio, #2, 663 Prentis, Detroit, MI 48201, www.downpeninsula.com

Lido Venice, The — Songs Written Around The Campfire in The Belly Of A Whale, CDEP

Ben Potrykus screams, "Doctor, doctor, I keep losing my patience!" This in the midst of musical storm, with a guitar that sounds like a cadaver's saw and a creepy rhythm scrapped together with all sorts of odd clicks. A fresh debut, with danceable grooves and an accordion. (TM)

ECA Records. 1st Floor 1056 Commercial St., Weymouth, MA 02189 www.ecarecords.com

🤊 Little Grizzly – When It Comes An End I Will Stand Alone, CD

I really enjoyed Little Grizzly's previous record, so I was sad to learn this is the band's swan song. The onesheet describes the Denton, Texas, band as "electrified folk," and this record seems much more rock than its predecessor (check "This Is Where I Feel"). Track six, "Elaine," even veers into Flaming Lips territory. I think they're strongest when they stick closer to their country roots ("Connie"), but even during their rock moments they remind me of Uncle Tupelo, and that's almost always a plus. Just check out album closer "My Goodnight" for proof. It's an excellent end to a great record and a strong way to cap the too-brief career of Little Grizzly. (KR) Woodson Lateral Records, 2112 S. Spokane St., Seattle, WA 98144, www.woodsonlateral.com

Locomotions, The - Teacher, 7"

The Locomotions eat a heavy diet of '70s Detroit rock 'n' roll, chew it up and spit it out with a millennial approach to structure. All four tracks take an unexpected turn somewhere in the song, making a typical rock discinto a gem. (EA) Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195, www.blanecrecords.com

Logh - The Contractor And The Assassin, CDEP

Five tracks of lush, full rock, *The Contractor And The Assassin* is surprisingly dense and complex for being less than 25 minutes long. Logh, a four-piece from Sweden, certainly know what they're doing, fusing loud and soft parts with a pop sensibility. The songs are melodic and expertly crafted. (JG) Bad Taste Records, Box 1243, S-221 05 Lund, Sweden, www.badtasterecords.se

Lords – The House That Lords Built, CD

Lords' chaotic metal-core is played with a furious hustle—a need to spew it all out before the music itself begins to take hold and strangle. There are traces of Converge in the drumming and the Blood Brothers vocally. They get experimental on track 10, but it's good overall. (AJA) InItial Records, PO Box 17131, Louisville, IXY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Lovedrug - Pretend You're Alive, CD

Kirk Hammett called—he wants his lick back. All right, to be fair it's just one

tune that sounds strikingly Metallica-esque, then the record takes a sharp Britpop turn, which, you know, is more what you'd expect from a band called Lovedrug, (DAL)

La Descente Du Coude / the Mascots

The Militia Group, 1215 N. Red Gum, Suit L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.themllitiagroup.com

Lunasuit - Summer Season, CD

Lunasuit are from the UK and play melodic hardcore with female vocals. The prettiness of the vocals make for likely comparisons to Discount, but the faster tempos are actually more reminiscent of SoCal bands like Pennywise. Probably a bit too generic for most tastes, but it works for me. (AE)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19, 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Mahi Mahi - He No Wa. CD

It burbles and squeaks, it gurgles and snaps. Mr. Roboto may have had a few cocktails and come to think he's funky, but I still can't see this appealing to many beyond the world of hardcore electronic groove. (DAL) Corleone, PO Box 65, Providence, RI 02901, www.corleonerecords.com

Malavista - S/T, CDEP

A skate-punk band that plays in the same vein as The Faction and U.S. Bombs. Although not nearly as rewarding as Caballero's old band, this EP might be of interest to '80s skate-punk fanatics. (RL)

Rezist Records, 4300 Price Lane, Longview Texas, 75605, www.rezistrecords.com

Manamid - Standard Candles, CD

This Greensboro, N.C., trio has a unique sound. Their group singing has an innocent power, especially when contrasted with the song structures that play with the listener, latching onto a groove and then pulling back all of a sudden. They start and stop to maximum effect. (DAL)

Ultravision/Multiplex Records, 301 S. Elm St., Sulte 527, Greensboro, NC 27401

Marvel - Bedlam At The Embassy, 7"

Another great EP from this NYC by-way-of Sweden superhero-themed rock 'n' roll trio. If you like polished, classic rock sounds with a tiny bit of kitsch factor (think everything from Queen to The Darkness to Kiss), you must check out Marvel, whose songs are way too catchy for auditory displeasure. (MG)

Black Juju Records, c/o Gunnarsson, Platensgatan 5B, 582 20 Linköping, Sweden,

Mascots, The — Hate You Back, CD

Discordant and chaotic, *Hate You Back* is an exercise in volatility. That's not to say it doesn't have its moments, like on the witty "This Is War! (Anti-Emo Song)" and the anti-melodic "Yer So Fucked." In the end, however, there just isn't enough here to redeem the record. (BN)

The Magic Spot Productions, PO Box 146, River Grove, IL 60171 www.themagicspot.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Todd Martens (TM)

Material Issue, Freak City Soundtrack. Material Issue's songs were based on the simple premise that the drama and insecurities of high school never really go away. They may not have been the first pop band to stumble on the idea, but the songs of Material Issue—nearly all of them fixed with big hooks and bigger choruses—worked because they hit specific emotions through old-fashioned storytelling. From the frantic panic attack of "Goin' Through Your Purse" to the goofy confessions of "Funny Feeling," the should-have-been hit that was made for arena sing-alongs and hand-clapping, the characters in Material Issue's songs bounced between lust and confusion, sometimes within the same verse. Inside his girlfriend's purse, singer Jim Ellison finds little more than a check stub, a high school graduation ring and "some poetry from a stupid jerk," and yet he's convinced his significant other is hiding something. These were characters driven mad by relationships, even though Ellison could admit that she was little more than an "Ordinary Girl." Like the best of Material Issue, "Ordinary Girl" was simple and concise, utilizing a repetitive riff and recurring lyrical hook to grapple with indefinable feelings. It's impossible not to note that Freak City Soundtrack was recorded two years before Ellison committed suicide, but this isn't the sound of someone wanting to give up. "I'm trying hard to understand," Ellison sings in the album's final moments, and it's the difficult declaration that one only truly feels alive when attempting to answer the unanswerable.

Stuff that doesn't suck: Steve Earle, Revolution Starts Now, Drive By Truckers The Dirty South, The Fiery Furnace, Gallowsbird's Bark; and Caviar, Thin Mercury Sound.

Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

Belle And Sebastian, Tigermilk. When I first bought this album (on a whim) I was a little disappointed, and after a couple of listens, I set it down. Being used to music that isn't as quiet and quaint, I found the simple and airy pop tunes on here a little boring. The music reminded me of those shorts they used to play on Sesame Street—you know, like that "Everybody Sleeps" song where they show clips of babies and animals napping. Anyway, months later I must have been desperate for something new and spun this one again to find these simple pop tunes were actually pretty catchy, and the devilishly cheeky lyrics were sly enough to elicit a smile or chuckle just from listening. Slowly, Tigermilk grew to become one of my favorite albums, perfect for summer drives to the beach or quiet days at home reading or lounging around. With sugar-laced vocals, shimmering melodies and acid-tongues, Stuart Murdoch and Co. breeze through 10 tracks of '60s-influenced pop goodness. Now that I've grown to appreciate the revert, silly organ melodies and bubbly bass lines, I've acquired a couple more Belle And Sebastian albums, and though many would argue If You're Feeling Sinister is a much better album, I prefer the less-polished, simpler sound on this album.

Playlist: Ride, Nowhere, Radiohead, Hail To The Thief, Lush, Spooky, Mogwai, Happy Music For Happy People, Sonic Youth, Washing Machine.

Reruns: new reissues from punk's past.

Dickies, The – Stukas Over Disneyland, CD

My favorite Dickies record gets another reissue. This edition has the eight songs from the original 12" release, and it's being sold at EP price, but it omits three songs that had been tacked onto some previous CD versions. Released in 1983 after they were dropped by A&M, Stukas includes some of the Dickies' best moments-"Rosemary," "Hunchback," "If Stuart Could Talk"—making it an essential piece of early pop-punk goodness by one of the genre's progenitors. However, you'd do well to keep an eye on the used bins for the version that also includes the classics "Gigantor," "I'm Okay, You're Okay" and "Bedrock Barney." (JC)

Overground Records, PO Box 1NW, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE99 1NW, UK, www.overgroundrecords.co.uk

Doctor Alimantado — Born For A Purpose, CD

A collection of tunes recorded in the '70s by Jamaican DJ Doctor Alimantado. His second-string status can be gauged by the uninspiring quality of backing tracks provided by ace producers like Lee Perry and King Tubby. "Dreadlocks Dread" and a few others cuts are really tight, but the rest are forgettable. (AJ)

Greensleeves Records, Suite 1203, 135 West 29th St., New York, NY 10001, www.greensleeves.net

Dragons, The – Rocknroll Kamikaze, CD

Upon its original release in 2001, The Dragons' Rocknroll Kamikaze was largely ignored as Junk Records was busy going out of business. Enter Gearhead, who have remixed, remastered and reissued it, adding five bonus tracks. Good thing, 'cause this is a killer rock record that deserves to be heard. (IC)

Gearhead Records, PO Box 421219, San Francisco, CA 94142, www.gearheadrecords.com

Eek-A-Mouse - Mousketeer, CD

An '80s commercial success that extended past reggae's own reach, this classic has been reissued by Greensleeves with digital remastering and bonus tracks (remixes). Nonsensical and whimsical, Eek-A-Mouse's playful singing evokes an innocence not unlike a 10-year-old has while doing thores. The lulling backing band simply adds an idiosyncratic sophistication. (VC) Greensleeves Records USA, 135 West 29th St., Suite 1203, New York, NY 10001, www.greensleeves.net

Forever Is Forgotten – Dying Beautiful, CDEP

This EP from Milwaukee's Forever Is Forgotten is pretty standard as far as "tech metal" goes. It includes a live video from Furnace Fest 2003, with lots of skinny middle-class white kids spinning around in the audience, pretending they are trying out for a kung-fu movie. Pretty entertaining. (TK)

Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, www.thorprecords.com

Hellstomper - The Real Hillbilly Motherfucker. CD

Whoa, two issues in a row with two different essential Hellstomper reissues. This is their Man's Ruin full-length, with an added unreleased track and five acoustic numbers. Tragically, this incredible, underrated country-punk band will play their last show ever at this year's C.O.S. Supershow in Austin. (AE)

Steel Cage Records, PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125, www.steelcagerecords.com

Locust, The - Follow The Flock Step In Shit, CDEP

This little CD packs quite the punch. The Locust creates such a big, dense sound in such a masterful way—the bass is thick and burly, and the lo-fi noises are awesome. The dichotomy between the lower and higher pitched screamers works great. This EP is quite the brilliant noise assault. (EH) Three One G, PO Box 178262 San Diego, CA 92177, www.threeoneg.com

Mentally III, The - Gacy's Place: The Undiscovered Corpses, CD

Somebody let The Mentally III out again, and it's a good thing. The original EP of Gacy's Place was released in Chicago in 1979 with a pressing of 300, and this rerelease beefs up the tracks to 20 with unreleased and alternate tracks from the period. This is quintessential noise punk: Sado Marguis did the foul lyrics and creeped-out vocals while Skitz Phrenic created the music and played bass. Special Ed's drums are choppy and pounding, but it's Hans Doolittle's guitar that stands out most of all—it's electrocutingly sharp and grating. As Skitz puts it in the liner notes, "Hans was dragging his nails across a blackboard, and we asked him if he could make a guitar sound like that." All of it is done in a crude production that's totally fitting and only adds to the sound. The strongest tracks come from the Starbeat Sessions that lead the album, from which the original EP was drawn. Although I don't usually enjoy alternate takes, the

Basement and Crawlspace Sessions are fairly good, too, and will be musts for fanatics as well as a worthy document of the time. Excellent and worth a listen. (BA) Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Frandsco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

Mundell, Hugh - Mundell, CD

I may not be the most educated reggae fan, but this blast from 1982 sounds great. It's similar to Marley and Jimmy Cliff with a sincere base in roots ska and reggae. Laid back tunes of Jah and African love. Much love to this one for a remastered recording with four bonus tracks. (DM)

Greensleeves Records (USA) LTD., Suite 1203, 135 W. 29th St. New York, NY 10001, www.greensleeves.net

9 Obsessed - Incarnate, CD

This is a collection of songs that have been released in many formats and recorded between 1983 and 1994. The Obsessed were a seminal heavy-metal band from Washington D.C. that reformed in LA. They played music like Black Sabbath in an age of Minor Threat, Beck and Nirvana. The enhanced CD is full of goodies, like the original 7" and even a music video. My favorite song comes from a Bong Load 7" and features Buzz from the Melvins on lead drums. They cover Lynyrd Skynyrd's classic "On The Hunt." All Scott Wino's awesome guitar solos throughout the CD and two-drum tag team really say something about the versatility of the band. (DI)

Southern Lord Records, PO Box 291967, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.southernlord.com

Ranking Joe - Weakheart Fadeaway, CD

A truly classic reggae album from '78 by a lesser known, but highly talented, second generation Jamaican DJ, whose inspiration to chat over dubbed-out instrumental tracks came from dreads like Dillinger and Big Youth. Joe rides 10 excellent Coxsone Dodd produced rhythms like a stoned Jamaican biker on a Honda CB200. Tuff stuff. (AJ) Greensleeves Records, Suite 1203, 135 West 29th St., New York, NY 10001. www.greensleeves.net

© Really Red –Teaching You The Fear,

It is about time that a label released the classic debut record by Houston's Really Red. Overshadowed by Texas bands such as the Big Boys and the Dicks, this record should be sitting along them in the great punk rock hall of fame. They're often compared to Minutemen because of their unconventional song structure, but they do not sound the same. Like the Big Boys, they got a little soul and funk to their music to keep it swingin'. Ronnie Bonds' vocals are

better than H. Rollins or J. Biafra's ever were, making this a must own. (EA) Empty Records, PO Box 12301, Portland, OR 97212, www.emptyrecords.com

P Ripcordz - Are Go!, CD

Finally, a reissue of the first Ripcordz LP. Now the kids too lazy to own a turntable can finally hear this punk classic, with six bonus songs thrown in for good measure. Most people in the U.S. haven't even heard of Ripcordz. If they have, based on appearances, they probably think of the band as French Canada's answer to The Casualties. In actuality, Ripcordz has been a band since 1980, and this debut album is a strange and diverse work. Mixing together garage, rockabilly and Exploited-styled hardcore, Ripcordz took the punk world aback with this now classic record in 1988. It doesn't sound dated today, but it is an unusual work, opening with the overlong joke song "Elvis Death Cult," which clocks in at four-and-ahalf minutes. It gets stranger from there, with song after song defying hardcore punk stereotypes by piling on the rockabilly rhythms and heavy bass lines. The band toned down these influences over the years, but continues to remain unique, powerful and under-appreciated. How many of their nine albums do you have? (AE)

Mayday! Records, 78 Rachel E, Montreal, Quebec, HZW. 1C6. Canada, www.unionlabelgroup.com

P Rocket From The Crypt – Circa: Now! (+4), CD

I pity the fool who hasn't heard and loved this record. The genesis of what would become their trademark sound, Circa Now! was initially released in 1993. It was their secand record the first one that incorporated horns into the rock assault. RFTC take the swagger of early rock 'n' roll and filter it through punk and post-punk, producing a sound that's both classic and fresh. This reissue has been remastered and includes four bonus tracks, which the band had recorded for Interscope Records after the label bought the record from Cargo. The label released Circa: Now! before RFTC finished the songs, and they've sat dormant in a vault somewhere since. Like a lot of b-sides & bonus tracks, there's a reason they never saw the light of day. They're essential only for RFTC geeks like myself (though "Flight Of The Hobo" is pretty kickass), but if you don't own Circa: Now!, pick this up immediately. The rerelease features expanded liner notes with photos from the era and a long narrative by guitarist/vocalist Speedo about recording the album in LA during the Rodney King riots. Handwritten in Reis' messy scrawl, they tell

an interesting story of recording this seminal album during martial law. Get this. (KR) Swami Records, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162, www.swamirecords.com

Smith, Wayne – Under Me Sleng Teng, CD

The title track of this release, widely considered to be the birth of "dancehall" reggae—the digital, computerized version of reggae that swept Jamaica in the '80s—was Smith's only hit. Listening to the rest of these tracks, it's obvious why. With few exceptions, dancehall is soulless crap. Stick to the roots. (A)

Greensleeves Records, Suite 1203, 135 West 29th St., New York, NY 10001, www.greensleeves.net

Vrinals, The - Negative Capability...Check it Out!, CD

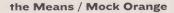
The Urinals are a somewhat obscure late '70s LA punk group with a minimalist that makes Jonathan Richman sound like Yngwie Malmsteen. The Urinals are often compared to Wire, which is a fair assessment, but they lack Colin Newman's witty lyrics or the interactive guitar work of Bruce Gilbert. Again, The Urinals play music with a such a minimalist style that it's much more primitive than anything on Pink Flag. In that sense, this is a very interesting record. The band holds on to chords until they literally can't take it anymore. The only question is can you? Personally, I love horribly recorded, art-school minimalist punk. That said, I can overlook the fact that the group does not have a Lou Reed or Newman at its helm (quite often the intrinsic charm of any minimalist group). The Urinals openly forfeit any chance of "I'm Waiting For The Man" lyrical success to truly bring you the most bare product available; and, in that, the band was a perfect success. P.S. Check out the 13th Floor Elevators cover. (RL)

Warning Label Records, 49 School Street, Arlington, MA 02476, www.warninglabelrecords.com

Yellowman – Nobody Move Nobody Get Hurt, CD

Part of the Greensleeves reissue series, Yellowman's 1982 release has been remastered with an additional bonus track. Musically the record sways from traditional reggae towards the dub genre. The sub bass drops and delayed guitar chops provide maximum relaxation, but the droning, repetitive vocals might harsh your mellow. (BM)

Greensleeves Records, Suite 1203, 135 West 29th St., New York, NY 10001, www.greensleeves.net





Means, The / Stnnng - split, 7"

The Means contribute two energetic, dirty and heavy rock gems with a high dose of spastic, bass-heavy, stop-start originality. Stnnng play like an insane and out of control mathy/experimental Shellac mixed up a notch with Arab On Radar. Awesome! (MG)

Nodak Records, PO Box 478885, Chicago, IL 60647, www.nodakrecords.com

Melee - Everyday Behavior, CD

Energetic pop-punk with some nice turns on the piano, but otherwise rather ho-hum, especially for fans of the Get Up Kids. It's inoffensive and mildly diverting, the kind of music Mandy Moore probably pops in when she wants to rock out. (TM)

Sub City Records PO Box 7495 Van Nuys, CA 91409, www.subcity.net

Mendoza Line, The - Fortune, CD

Sleepy ballads that are usually on heavy rotation courtesy of your local yuppie non-profit NPR easy-listening station. Is this soundtrack the to an IKEA commercial featuring smartly dressed urbanites? Or was it used to pimp Volkswagen automobiles to gentrifying jerk-offs? Either way, I'm not buying it. (AA)

Bar None Records. PO Box 1704, Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.bar-none.com

Mercury Legion – It's A Wonderful Life, CD

I heard a rumor that this band was going to be the focus of an upcoming Fox special entitled When Punk Rock Bar House Bands Save Up Enough Money From Their Day Jobs To Release An Album. There's nothing sadder than old punks that don't know when to quit. (DH)

Cirque Entertainment, no contact information provided

Metalux - Waiting for Armadillo, CD

Deranged soundscapes that are both bewildering and frightening are unleashed here. Synth and audio tape attacks with some fragmented female spoken word and vocals assist with setting a lack of tone. A night-marish and dark audio façade that sets a mood like no other. (DM) Load Records, PO Box 35 Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

Microwaves - Attack Decay Sustain Release, CD

This band wants to cook listeners in a space microwave of their own villainous creation. Multiple waves from guitars and synth radiate relentlessly, most of them pounding, others like sirens clouding ranting vocals. Some parts are silly exercises that detract from it overall, though there's some innovation here. (BA)

New Addition, PO Box 81162, Pittsburgh, PA 15217, newadditionmedla@hotmail.com

Millenary - Feel The Heat, CD

Power-poppy, with sort of a '60s psychedelic undertone, this album is pretty good. Something about it reminds me of a lot of other power-pop bands I have heard. (The Cinch and the Ponys come to mind.) I expected something different, because the CD cover reminds me of a punk-rock album cover from the '80s: a '50s era family in an idyllic moment, a mushroom cloud visible through a window. The songs are very simple, with Debby Harry-ish female vocals. One part of a song even sounds like "Willie And The Hand Jive." There are even a few OK guitar solos mixed into the songs. Although I liked it, it took some time to grow on me, and the songs could use better production. (JJG)

Self-released, www.millenary.net

Milwaukees, The - Angels With A Knife, CD

Apparently this band has been featured in a Miller beer commercial and on MTV's *Undressed*, whatever that is. Dang, what do they need *Punk Planet* for? If the answer is underground cred, they'll need to do better than this slick and syrupy collection. (DAL)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19, 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Minnie's - The Sing Along Experience, CDEP

It's hard not to be a sucker for Minnie's. Not only do they match the driving guitar riffs, melodic breaks and earnest lyrics that made bands like Jawbreaker the quintessential soundtrack for hopeless romantics, they're also Italian. This post-debut EP reflects their strength as songwriters in their own right. (CC)

Riot Records, Viale Monza 26, 20127 Milano, Italy, www.riotrecords.com

Minus 5 - In Rock, CD

Scott McCaughey's "supergroup" featuring Peter Buck and William Rieflin. The fellas evidently had a good time recording this—good spirits, nostal-gic Beatles-type songs and lots of lyrical "in-jokes." Not really the type of thing those of us who weren't in on the fun are gonna want to hear more than once. (AJ)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Minus The Bear - The Make Beer Commercials Like This, CDEP

I love silly song titles like "I'm Totally Not Down With Rob's Alien." But don't think MTB is some joke band; this EP's mostly ominous sound (like a less angry, more noodley Your Enemies Friends) is anything but jocular. The synths, noisy, syncopated rhythms—this CD has an uncommon, interesting edge. (KR) Arena Rock Recording Company, 17 SE Third Ave., #405, Portland, OR 97214, www.arenarodrecordingoz.om

Mock Orange - Mind Is Not Brain, CD

The opening song on Mock Orange's third album is a gorgeous thing. Before the chorus rescues singer Ryan Grisham, feedback has bled into a melody, and a marching-band rhythm has pushed the guitars aside. "Who brought on the let down?" Grisham asks, and Mock Orange has turned the destruction of post-college idealism into an indie-rock party. Produced by post-punk luminary J. Robbins, *Mind Is Not Brain* never really tops track one, but there are plenty of moments where the band comes close. "East Side Song" is delightful in its preciousness, and "Make Friends" is an exuberant mesh of spacey affects, swirling harmonies and air-guitar-worthy riffs, not too mention an expertly placed "uh oh." Packed with squiggly guitars and odd tempo changes, *Mind Is Not Brain* should make The Shins jealous. (TM) Silverthree Records, PO Box 3621 Fairfax, VA 22038, www.silverthree.com

Demo-lition Derby: CD-Rs

Dead Betties, The – S/T, CDR

Kinda artsy, kinda rock 'n' rolly, kinda boring. I can't take the vocals. The music just reeks of fashion. Maybe I'm reading into it too much, but from the look of the CD and their sound, they seem a lot like all the other pretentious, artsy fashion-core bands out there. (DA)

Drawing Dead - Recordings January 2004, CDR

I can't get past the vocals on this long enough to focus on the music. It's hardcore with an '80s metal edge and a terrible singer. (KM)

www.drawingdead.net

© Eva Destruction And Her Big Band – S/T, CDR

The very attractive duo of Eva Destruction and Gary Indiana slurp down tried-and-true punk classics, then spit them out as loungified acoustic ditties. I'm gonna go out on a limb here and say this is not ironic: Eva's vocals are actually spot on in their sultry reconstructions of the snotty originals, and Gary Indiana is a perfectly capable multi-instrumentalist. (He is, after all, the one man "big band" of the title). Here we have the Misfits' "Die, Die My Darling," in which Glen Danzig's brawn is replaced with Eva's breathiness, the Sex Pistols' "Submission" slowed down so that they draw out each painfully suggestive line, and one of my personal favorites, "Bloodstains" by Agent Orange. They really take that one for a whirl, building to the famously dramatic chorus and then-letting the bottom drop out

entirely. Clever, clever. Come on, you know it had to be pretty damn clever for me to make a three-song EP a highlighted pick. Check 'em out! (DAL)

www.cabaretpunk.com

Eyelash - Uses Of Disorder, CDR

Eyelash play gloomy, heavy rock directed rightly toward alternative-rock radio. Gruff girl vocals, heavy drumbeat, "dark" and brooding lyrics...I'm bored and sleepy. (AJA) www.eyelash.biz

Fallen Angles - Buy Any Memes Necessary!!!, CDR

Sludgy bass and guitar with demonic/distorted vocals and various odd but interesting samples intermixed. Other outtakes are mostly electronic. Great name, at least. (BA)

 $fallen_angles@popstar.com$

Heroes and Villains - We Kill Birds, CDR

An extremely ambitious debut that often mixes the electronic moodiness of Radiohead with the organic, bittersweet melodies of My Morning Jacket. Highly recommended. (MS)

PO Box 1117 735, Anderson HIII Road, Purchase, NY 10577

Hue Of Two, The – Doctor! Doctor! This City's Sick!. CDR

These four tracks are the emo results of having too many off-key cooks in the kitchen. The male and female vocals collide unnaturally, causing a real headache. (SM) 471 Englewood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14223, www.hueoftwo.com

D Linus, S/T, CDR

I was hooked from the first track by the impressive catchiness of post hXc, emo and punk mixed with metal guitar/ rock parts with oohs aahs. The singing guy/screaming guy thing has been a bit overdone, but I would be more inclined to see these guys over Thursday. Rad and wicked talented guys! (DM) 799 Forest Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15209, www.linus123.com

Mockingbird Lane - 2003 Demo, CDR

Misfits-inspired horror core with soulful, although monotone, vocals. There's a hint of Drunk Injuns' skate rock sound too, but not much energy yet. (NS) www.mockingbirdlane.bravepages.com

Pack Of Vipers - S/T, CDR

A Rochester band that slowly builds with languid strums and beats that flutter away like paper dissolving in acid. Then it turns into heavy metal. (DAL)

Ray Gradys, The - Die Mindless Fools, CDR

Johnny Thunders-influenced punk rock with impossible to hear vocals and gratuitous use of the word "fuck." Boring. (KM)

www.raygradys.8m.com

Renminbi - The Great Leap, CDR

This New York trio has produced a surprisingly textured sound using only drums, keys and guitar. Think Slint with a Bikini Kill slant. Track five is the most notable: all

instrumental with driving guitar melody and mathy moments. (LW)

www.renminbinyc.com

Safety First - The Bipolar Deficiencies Of America's Youth, CDR

Safety First have good hardcore songs. Their guitars could use some tightening up, though—I heard some mistakes. (SJ)

seussmanla@msn.com

7/8 Quick - S/T, CDR

Reminiscent of the SoCal/ SST scene, it's basic, no-frills punk similar to the Minutemen or the Descendents. Like old SST records, it's flawed but not bad overall. (DM) www.seven8squick.com

Unless - Writers Workshop Demo, CDR

Messy tech-metal hardcore with ear-shattering Cookie Monster vox. Despite the painful vocals, this ain't a bad example of metallic hardcore done right. (MG) 2338 Loyola Dr., Davls, CA 95616, unless@ysdhc.com

Morning 40 Federation - S/T, CD

These dudes come off like a GWAR for the jam band crowd. Bluesy rock with a horn section that veers between drunken funk grooves and wild freakouts. A few good ideas here and there that don't amount to much. (AJ)

M80. www.m80music.com

Mourning Star - Distrato, CD

This album is typical screamo, ranging from poppy, whiny singing to harsh screaming. The music goes from melodic to distorted and heavy. Nothing stands out, and the songs are repetitive. Some parts are catchy, but on the whole it lacks creativity. Nothing new here. (EH)

Falcom Records, www.falcomrecords.com

Morningsides, The - Summer Song / A Mole Hill Is A Mound, 7"

The first song on this release was rocking pop in the vein of Pavement if Pavement were more influenced by an early Rolling Stones. Side B offered up a slower xylophone-laden pop ditty that had a nice melody. Although it doesn't offer anything exciting, this was a highly enjoyable release. (KM) Recommended If You Like Records, 148 College Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603, www.recommendedfivoulikercords.com

Mouserocket - S/T, CD

Mouserocket is the entertaining latest project from Alicja Trout of Lost Sounds and Fitts fame. Her unique, "too cool" voice is perfect for these well-crafted pop songs. This album is a joy, though some of the external noises, distortions and other shenanigans are a bit much. (AE) Empty Records, PO Box 12301, Porlland, OR 97212, www.emptyrecords.com

My Dad Is A Dinosaur - S/T, CD

First of all, there are 20 TRACKS on this record, which is totally excessive. You dudes need to learn to wrap it up, OK? My Dad is lo-fi girl/guy-fronted rocky stuff and not very good. Lesson: Just because you can record an album, doesn't mean you should. (JG)

Prison Jazz Records, 431 Birch St., Scranton, PA 18505, www.prisonjazz.com

My Revenge – Less Plot, More Blood, CD

Generic, straightforward hardcore in the vein of many late '80s bands. Nothing to write home about musically or lyrically. I respect the fact that Thorp keeps putting out records by unknown hardcore bands, but there has to be some better ones out there. (DH)

Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, www.thorprecords.com

My So-Called Band - Weapons Of Mass Distortion, CD

I've said this before, and I'm saying it again: This band is great. This is their fifth release, but I first heard of them when I reviewed their last one, Always Something There To Destroy Me. I loved that one, and I love this one even more. They play straight-forward punk with honest, thoughtful lyrics that from anyone else would sound cliché, but they have a personal touch that

rises above the jaded punk stereotypes. Eight songs about the Patriot Act, class war, the war in Iraq and people who live vicariously through message boards. I still wish these guys would get the hell out of NC so I could see them already! (TK)

Self-released, PO Box 9599, Charlotte, NC 28299, www.mysocalledband.com

Nagisa Ni Te - The Same As A Flower, CD

A man and woman comprise this band, switching instruments and singing along with assorted others, creating a timeless recording much different from your average Japanese pop star. It has some Beach Boys-type harmony and sounds like Neil Young's *Harvest*. The guitars can be soft and other times fuzzy, but mostly pretty. (DI)

Jagjaguwar, 1499 W. Second St. Bloomington, IN 47403, www.jagjaguwar.com

National, The - Cherry Tree, CDEP

This follow-up to the band's critically acclaimed 2003 release, *Sad Songs For Dirty Lovers*, is a seven-song catalog of heartbreak and regret layered over lush strings and piano. Standout tracks include "About Today," which evokes the uncertainty of an ending relationship, and a live version of Joy Division-inspired "Murder Me Rachel." (LW)

Brassland, PO Box 76, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, www.brassland.org

Nautical Almanac - Rooting For The Microbes, CD

With headphones, you could imagine yourself in some aural torture session with 1950s sci-fi undertones. Using custom-made equipment, they claim that "no electricity or computers were used" to make these jarring noises. It's not for everyone, but the result's commendable, even if you wade through some portions. (BA)

Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

Naughty Candy - Previously Engaged, CDEP

Despite the less-than-stellar band name (but what do I know?), Naughty Candy plays some enjoyable country-tinged folk pop with spacey guitars and Rilo Kiley-esque vocals. Sturdy and steady like a fat man playing flag football, this EP keeps it upbeat and keeps it moving. Thank you. (AJA) Self-released, www.naughtycandy.com

Near Life Experience — I'll Take Your Silence As A Loud Yes, CD

Thinly produced, for one. Next, it seems to me that these guys like a lot of nü metal, but mostly System Of A Down (who I think are great). Every once and a while a good riff shines though, but for the most part this is just more singing-metal. (DH)

Hanging Out With The Cool Kids, www.hangingoutwiththecoolkids.com

Neins, The – Skinny Black Jeans, 7"

Two tracks of good garage rock. The A side is a goofy, fun ode to pants, complete with a fuzzy, surfy guitar solo. The B side is another catchy number

with a cool organ. There are only a few lyrics, but it would work for your next toga or beach party. (NS)

Self-released, 6319 NE 32nd Pl., Portland, OR 97211, www.theneins.com

New Tragedies, The - S/T, CDEP

The New Tragedies' first song has a melody that falls flat, instilling little faith in the remainder of the EP; however, they pick it up with the country-flecked "Cannonball" and "Overboard", bearing a resemblance to Wilco and Jeff Tweedy's half-sung lullabies. Not bad. (AJA)

Self-released, www.thenewtragedies.com

1999 - The Midnight People, 7"

While they might have some similarities with the loads of other dancey bands out there, 1999 don't follow the "I'm too sassy for my own good" formula, which is a nice change. They have a bit more of a darker (goth?) sound that works well. I liked this record. (KM)

Release The Bats Records, c/o Matthias Anderrsson, Tellusgatan 22, 4:e Vån, 415 19 Göteborg, Sweden, www.releasethebats.com

No Secrets Between Sailors - Lines, CDEP

Hello, early '90s guitar rock! It's good to see you again amidst all of this screamo. Huge Jesus Lizard influence here, but with enough of their own personality and groove to not just be a photocopy. Good vocals, good production, but only two songs. I require more! (DH)

Self-released, foote_a@yahoo.com, nosecretsbetweensailors@yahoo.com

North Side Kings - Organizing Our Neighborhood, CD

Generic, tough-guy hardcore/thrash for people under the drinking age. These guys chant on and on about how much pride and respect they have for their "'hood," and I don't doubt them for a second. What they don't have is the ability to write cool songs. (AJ)

Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, www.thorprecords.com

Not Long After - Tomorrow Come Save Us, CD

Not Long After play quality melodic punk with plenty of grabs. It's an enhanced CD with a music video, live footage, photos and more. This CD won't be winning any originality awards, but neither does most of today's quality punk rock. (AE)

New School Records!, PO Box 2094, Oregon City, OR 97045, www.newschoolrecords.com

Not Very Good - Forget Me Hot, 7"

This pop-punk quartet hits track one with Cars homage, has a shitty Screeching Weasel second, does a better Knack third and rides out a power-pop anthem that The Exploding Hearts would have been proud of. Decent political lyrics abound. Once they find their sound, they'll show great promise. (VC)

Self-released, www.notverygood.org

Reviewer Spotlight: Sean Moeller (SM)

Sugarplastic, Bang, The Earth Is Round. Have you ever been flipping through a magazine and seen an ad promoting a new record for a band that you once liked but had lost track of? They were that one band you listened to for the better part of a summer or during a long break-up recovery, before you discovered something else—say, Third Eye Blind or Nerf Herder—leaving them to the company of your Snow record. To look back and see how close I was to the right path back in 1996 when this exquisite pop record by Sugarplastic was my all is similar to the moments when you're watching Jeopardy! and you have that right answer in your head,but don't say it out-loud. It was there, but convincing anyone else that your recall surpasses all measurement is impossible. I liked the band that could have been my natural bridge to Neutral Milk Hotel and Beulah, taking me over all those Drive Thru bands I supported half decade ago without actually having to touch them. Still, this record, with ideas and odd, lofty songwriting ambition, holds up and could meet something sweeter and more right-brained than The Shins' Chutes Too Narrow. I was there, and I didn't know it. All the years that I lost.

Current occupations: The Legends, Up Against The Legends, Supergrass, Supergrass Is 10, V/A, Future Soundtrack of America, The Fiery Furnaces, Blueberry Boat, M. Ward, Transfiguration Of Vincent, Elliott Smith, From A Basement On The Hil

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr.)Dana Morse

Placebo, S/T. I first heard of this band a couple of years back with the success of their radio single "Pure Morning." After that I heard nothing about them for a bit other than occasional references to a band that sounded like Rush playing stoner alt-rock. More recently they released record on Astralwerks, and they became that band people went to see and talked about it like it was the show of the year. So at my work, I discovered a promo copy of it, and figured I'd give it a whirl. Since then I went back and collected their catalogue and became a devoted listener. Their first effort definitely has more punk-rock leanings while keeping their songwriting edge and style similar to Blake Schwarzenbach's (Jawbreaker, Jets To Brazii). Together it was modern poetry laid down rhythmically and with a great edge. These guys excelled in their craft so much that their latest record hit No. 1 in France. What does that mean for us in the U.S.? Well, it will never gain that kind of notoriety here, but we can still check out a record that shows Placebo rocking out where Shudder to Think should have left off.

What pumps my fist in the air? Ultraman, Constant Weight Of Zero, Comets On Fire, Blue Cathedral, Radio4, Stealing Of A Nation, Anodyne, Lifetime Of Gray Skies, and The Killing Gift (reviewed this issue).





Ntelos - S/T. CD

Decent noisy and spacey punk rock with often unintelligible, heavily baked vocals. A mock commercial leads off the demo. (BA)

Boron Recordings, boron.20m.com

O'Connor, Nora - 'Til the Dawn, CD

Straight-forward, no-fuss alt-county. On her first solo album, O'Connor plays carefully selected cover songs with people like Andrew Bird and Kelly Hogan backing her up. The album's two originals, "Tonight" and "My Backyard," are delicately beautiful and show off her lyrical aptitude. Not an earth-shattering effort, but a lovely listen. (LW)

Bloodshot Records, 3039 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

Only Crime - To The Nines, CD

Former Good Riddance singer Russ Rankin marks his return on this explosive tribute to the likes of Bad Brains and Black Flag: old-school punk with hardcore tendencies and an "in your face" attitude. Good Riddance fans should expect a surprise; the old band never sounded this pissed off or this good. (BN)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690 www.fatwreck.com

Only In Dreams – Under This Burning Sky, CD

I'm going to stick with my first impression: It sounds like a heavier Strung
Out. They use way too much double bass pedal. These guys are good at
what they do. The vocalist can sing, and they can play their instruments.
Throw away your Story Of The Year CD, and listen to this instead. (DA)
Pop Smear, 2269 Chestnut St., #970, San Francisco, CA 94123, www.popsmearrecords.com

Old Canes – Early Morning Hymns, CD

Appleseed Cast frontman Chris Crisci joins up with members of Minus Story and The Casket Lottery to create an album of folksy Americana. With a smoky, everyman kind of voice, Crisci plays songs with nicely varied instrumentation and good energy, even when laid back. The opening tracks are especially strong. (KR)

Second Nature, PO Box 413084, Kansas City, MO 64141, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Olympic Hopefuls - The Fuses Refuse To Burn, CD

The Olympic Hopefuls play a very accessible type of indie rock. Usually music like this requires repeated listening to get to know the songs, but I was hooked the first time. The melodies are poppy without being patronizing, and the lyrics are a little goofy (in a good way) without being ridiculous. The words are cool, but I'm not going to quote them because it's more about how they come across as a whole, rather than individual lines. The synths in some of the songs bring a strong Cars feel, but the Olympic Hopefuls never lose their own sound. The whole album has a strong drive to it,

never really slowing down for the obligatory ballad yet never falling into the redundancy trap, either. (SJ)

2024 Records, PO Box 580482, Minneapolis, MN 55401, www.2024records.com

Only Children, The − S/T, CDEP

Josh Berwanger was weaned on the *Anthology Of American Folk*, which would explain the transformation his old band The Anniversary took after September 11th. Around then, those Midwesterners got a lot more Americana, striding toward being a kind of Simon And Garfunkel du jour. They disbanded last December, and Berwanger, prone to being skinnier than most and wearing the illest beret-like hats, sent out the call—likely via carrier pigeon—for like-minded children of the Earth to join him in The Only Children. The result is a one-way ticket to San Francisco via the '70s where ideals caught up to tongues and the sounds were always groovy. These three songs, a preview to a future full-length, are rootsier than anything The Anniversary could have rightfully gotten away with it, but it's honest and clean like a mountain spring. It could just be that he's found his comfort zone with the songs as effortless as respiration. (SM)

Self-released, www.theonlychildren.com

Opposed, The - Throwaway Society, CD

Slightly melodic, cookie-cutter, modern hardcore punk band with a couple interesting parts, but otherwise this release is unmemorable. After reading the lyric sheet, I think their hearts are in the right places, but the music just doesn't stand out. (KM)

Self-released, 2311 Ohio Ave. #4, Cincinnati, OH 45219, www.theopposed.com

Oranges Band – Two Thousands, CD

Ah, I'm-a-toe-tappin-and-a-hand-clappin and taking my merry old time listening to this record. Stripped down, wiry and angular punk rock that is perfectly poppy and wonderful. I love this. The CD collects their early EPs as well as a few extra bonus tracks. (MG)

Morphius Records, PO Box 13474, Baltimore, MD 21203, www.morphlus.com

9 Origami - Cruising For A Bruising, CDEP

I don't care that this sounds like Bikini Kill and Bratmobile's lost tour mates. Drivin' way too fast in my '65 Fairlane, I was blaring Origami for the first time, and fuck they caught me off guard. This is one gem of a record. From the opening fuzzed out bass I was taken back to the great Bikini Kill single produced by Joan Jett. It is that powerful and sounds so in your face. With the guitar used sparingly, or not at all, it easily compares to Bratmobile. Again, this short format helps Origami, as it's over before you would like. By the time I got home from my drive, I already knew half the lyrics and was singing along as if it was a worn out LP off my shelf. Look out for Origa-

mi to make a big splash. Rhonda Simmons is supposed to be a beast live, with a ferocity that is not to be outdone. (EA)

Shock Records, www.shockrecords.com

Oswalt, Patton - Feelin' Kinda Patton, CD

This is painfully funny, though definitely not for the faint of heart or easily offended. Easily up there with David Cross' *Shut Up You Fucking Baby*, this stand-up CD is perceptive (see the brief bit about Iraq), bizarre (midgets turning into gold coins) and random (a brilliant bit on the Paas Easter-egg-coloring "empire"). (KR)

United Musicians, www.unitedmusicians.com

9 Otasco - This Product Is Extremely Delicious!, CD

Sometimes certain records have songs so bad, you wonder if there was some mix up at the plant and the track accidentally slipped onto the master without anyone noticing until it was too late. Such is the case with track 10 on Otasco's *This Product Is Extremely Delicious*. "PSA: Tomorrow's Heroes" mars an otherwise perfectly pleasant Pavement-ish record with the startlingly bad chorus "smiling at the people that they see everyday/ even if they're gay," which is repeated *ad nauseum*. I'm sure this was meant to be some sort of singer-songwriter post-ironic irony, but it just generally ruins the record for me. Sorry, Otasco. (JG)

Apocalypse The Apocalypse, 5274 Glenburnie Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, www.apocalypsetheapocalypse.com

Paik - Satin Black, CD

This album made me feel like an early '70s Russian Factory worker. The pulsating metallic soundscapes reminded of a Bauhaus-like, minimalist, necessity-driven clog in an assembly line full of broken souls (the same could be said for struggling Detroit factory workers). Midway through these 14-minute songs, my workday ended, and I went out looking for bread. The only thing I could spend my nearly nonexistent paycheck on was size 8 work shoes, as bread was not on the consumer market that day. Disenfranchised, I went home and played Satin Black on my neighbor's stereo and reveled in its glorious ability to capture a bleak situation without the use of any words. My destitute friend and I smiled as we realized we had the soundtrack to our struggles, providing unbridled hope in a format which could have been used to document '70s MOR. Simply amazing. (RL) strange Attractors Audio House, PO BOX 13007, Portland, OR 97213, www.strange-attractors.com

PAL - Audio Peace Treaty, 7"

A stellar 7" that delves into political and consumer conditions. PAL brings a lyrical approach reminiscent of Entertainmentl, but in place of Jon King's laid back delivery, PAL places the frustrations of the self-defeating, lifestealing reality of corporate America in the forefront. The band backs their

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Moss (BM)

The Hi Fives, Get Down. There was a point in my life when referring to a band as pop-punk held no negative connotations. Lookout Records was having a heyday, releasing golden classics, magnetizing attention and envy toward the East Bay. Campy crush songs were played with class, audience members weren't afraid to dance, and Hurley didn't exist. I was young and dumb, knee deep in the sweaty-palmed hand-holding stage of my relationship with music. Me oh my, where have the glory days gone? Playing speedy, surf-toned punk around the groundwork of hook-heavy '60s era garage pop, The Hi Fives were playing the retro game well before it became a second-rate commodity. They were well dressed and armed with sonic charm; they were punk Casanovas, suave and smooth. Reminiscent of the Kinks and the Animals, they took an existing sound and gave it a modern makeover. The tracks on Get Down are thoroughly addictive, sure to charm even sternest of listeners into ass-shakin' singalongs. The songs transform the grime and aggression of mid-'90s punk through a time warp, back to a shining age when glistening, white-toothed smiles and risqué pop made teen girls scream and faint, while their fathers looked on, red-faced and threatened. If you've forgotten what made pop-punk fun, if the faux-hawk clad boy bands are driving you to abandonment, or if you just need a good, old fashioned ear-to-ear smile, here's a record that'll undoubtedly do ya right.

Rattling my inner trunk with: Soul Jazz Records Present, Studio One Sout, Fuel, Monuments To Excess; Enon, High Society; Descendents, Everything Sucks; Wet Hot American Summer, self-collected songs from the movie.

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

The Beltones, On Deaf Ears. I purchased On Deaf Ears shortly after hearing "Juvenile Delinquent" on an otherwise forgettable compilation. Something about the gritty guitars and gruff, razors-in-the-throat type vocals tugged at the street-punk aficionado in me. This impulse purchase lead to a discovery of a band that would never garner much in the way of scene-wide recognition, but, more importantly, would forever hold a prominent place in my record collection. The songs all come fast and rough—your basic stripped down street punk sound—but with an underlying tenderness that music freaks like me call passion. More evidence of this are the unusually (for the genre) introspective lyrics dealing with personal topics including family, death, friendship and struggle to put it all together, painting an unusually clear and descript portrait of blue-collar life. "My Old Man," "Juvenile Delinquent," "Fuck You Anyway" and the painfully sobering "Let The Bombs Fall" are all classic street-punk songs sung with urgency and a painful realization that not everything always turns out right. There is bitterness in the writing, sure, but there is also a core determination gives this record depth far beyond what a few chords, lines and screams could provide. On Deaf Ears is the rare record that I relate to on levels that most albums can't approach, and, with any justice, it should be considered an essential piece of street-punk history.

Now Playing: Swingin' Utters, Streets Of San Francisco; Burning Bright, 5 Song Demo; Screeching Weasel, Teen Punks In Heat; Weezer, Pinkerton.

Palomar / Polemic

message nicely with the tangibility of their format (vinyl) and sincere liner notes. (It's obvious that the band believes in what they're singing.) This album speaks volumes of the current predicament I'm in (as I'm sure a lot of you) as I try to find a benevolent occupation in this morally bankrupt society—which leaves me with this question: I wonder if the band majored in communications like I did? (RL)

CarterCo Records, PO Box 13031, Chicago, IL 60613, www.cartercorecords.com

Palomar - Palomar III: Revenge Of Palomar, CD

Another successful experiment in pop perfection. I wish I could type out this CD's first song in some sort of binary code that you could transcribe, because that's all you'd need to hear to get reeled in. Let me attempt to translate. Imagine the most pleasant female vocals in the world, like Karen Carpenter reincarnated as a litter of baby kittens, softly purring in your ear. But sometimes that Karen Carpenter kitty is a little more playful and trying to climb up the curtains. It's impossible not to smile. It's true that the vocals are the first thing that draws you in, but shortly thereafter, you'll notice the outstanding music that propels them. The guitars are light and cheery, with the jangle of '60s pop. The drums are playful and upbeat. The base is deceptively subtle, with fluid lines and catchy rhythms. If they're really planning a new version of *The Partridge Family*, then Palomar should be in charge of the songwriting. This is honestly not my "steez" at all, but this CD is truly awesome. I believe Palomar is in label limbo, but seek this out. (NS)

Self-released, www.palomartheband.com

Paper Champions, The - Weekend Of Compromise, CD

Ladies and gentlemen, breakout the tissue. What we've got here is a lackluster effort, bored and uninspired. The Atlanta-based quartet avoid referring to themselves as an emo band by describing their sound as melodic rock: denial is a strange thing. (BM)

Reason Y, 747 Barnett Street NE, No. 4, Atlanta, GA 30306, www.reasonyrecords.com

Part Chimp - Chart Pimp, CD

Total musical violence. Sludgy bottom end bludgeons the low register of your hearing, while bright, biting guitar lines attack the upper register. Fans of the Melvins, Jucifer and marijuana would dig these Londoners. In an alternate universe, this is the so-called "nü metal" that the kids are creaming over. (JC)

Monitor Records, PO Box 2361, Baltimore, MD 21203, www.monitorrecords.com

Paulson - Variations, CD

Let the jiggly synthesizer be your guide through this record that is intermittently epic and whiny. Maybe I'm just responding to the Dave Matthews

sound-a-like vocals, which are a little hard to swallow, though the music is often catchy and interesting. (DAL)

Initial Records, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Peacocks, The - It's Time For..., CD

Is insidiously catchy pop-punk with a standup bass still pop-punk? Most likely, but that stylistic difference is a nice change of pace. That whole psychobilly sound is pulled into the mix with the aforementioned upright, but there are catchy punk songs underneath it all. As a bonus (?) these guys are Swiss. (RR)

Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Phoenix Foundation. The - We Need To Make Some Changes, CDEP

Strong melodic, lighter punk or harder indie rock from Finland. Track four opens like an old Samiam song, which is nice. The record tends to remind me of something I can't place, but that familiarity makes it an easy listen. (KR) Newest Industry, Unite 100, 61 Wellfield Road, Cardiff, C424 306, UK, www.thenewestindustry.com

Pidgeon - From Gutter With Love, CD

At first, Pidgeon come off as a typical alternative outfit, but then comes a perfectly cute, catchy pop riff and then—wham—a wall of scary metal-feed-back-noise. From cute to scary in less than a minute, this strangely calming arrangement ends up working well through the whole record. (MG)

Absolutely Kosher, 1412 10th St., Berkeley, CA 94710, www.absolutelykosher.com

Pier, Ford - Pier-ic Victory, CD

The record opens up with a wonderful church organ and angelic singing. On this recording, Pier has managed to recreate a massive 1970s master-piece. The guitar, keyboards and drums sound like they were laid down in the biggest studio ever. The lyrics are smart and silly with some musical experimentation. (DI)

Six Shooter Records, PO Box 98038, 970 Queen Street East, Toronto, ON, M4M1J0, Canada, www.sixshooterrecords.com

Pigmy Love Circus - The Power Of Beef, CD

Hillbilly alterna-metal—that pretty much says it all. Of note to assholes: Tool drummer Danny Carey is in the band (as the sticker taking up almost a quarter of the cover announces), so the drumming in particular is strong. (RR) Go Karl Records, PO Box 20, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, www.gokartrecords.com

Pines - S/T, CDEP

With the proliferation of spacey, sludge-rock instrumental combos lately, I think that scene attracts mutes or illiterates. Still, the music left to do the

talking here is plenty gripping. As a change of pace, Pines go for less of an ultra-thick guitar sound, and it works. Sign this illiterate up. (RR)

Grey Flight, 16458 Boba Chica St. #409, Huntington Beach, CA 92649. grey

Pink Spiders, The - Are Taking Over!, CD

This band sounds like what a lot of "emo" bands try to do and fail: soft, melodic vocals alternating with shouted refrains, sad and beautiful pop melodies alternating with hard, punk-rock guitars. The Pink Spiders manage to sound both vulnerable and tough at the same time. I wouldn't call this "emo" though, because that is kind of an insult—there is no whining on this CD. There are hints of glam rock, Beatles-esque melody and metal mixed into their sound. The whole album seems to go by too quickly, with nary a dull spot. Despite the flavors of old rock 'n' roll blended into their sound, The Pink Spiders manage to sound modern and new. (IJG) Self-released, www.theplnkspiders.com

Pinkie - Sharon Fussy, CD

Featuring subtle string and key arrangements, jangly guitar, personal lyrics and Alex Sharkey's soothing vocals, this album is reminiscent of The Byrds and Britpop greats Pulp's most recent, more subdued work. The first full-length from this one-man band is melancholy, melodic music that will please any pop fan. (LW)

Planting Seeds Records, PO Box 64665, Virginia Beach, VA 23467, www.plantingseedsrecords.com

Pistol For A Paycheck - Persona Non Grata, CD

A song like "Anchor"—just two into *Persona Non Grata*—is a good indication that Pistol For A Paycheck seek love. In it are morsels for the grunge kid, the acoustic kid, the pop kid, the screamo kid and the kid who gets really weird about basslines. They'd make good politicians with their ability to be flexible on the issues. (SM)

Burning Bullding Recordings, PO Box 17789, Seattle, WA 98107, www.bbrecordings.com

Plastic Constellations, The - Mazatlan, CD

It smacks of the elusive indie-groove genre, like a jam band that discovered dissonance. These guys take off from there and work toward epic sonic swirls, which is sort of cool, but they do it in three-minute songs, so there's just not enough build up. (DAL)

2024 Records, PO Box 580482, Minneapolis, MN 55401, www.2024records.com

Polemic - Plastic On The Mouth Hole, CD

Polemic brings Steve Albini to mind playing music that sounds like shattering glass on top of painfully slow tempos. While there are some good ideas here, they are overridden by the monotonously long songs. (SJ) Roy G Biv Music / Self-released, PO Box 661, Athens, GA 30603, www.polemicmusic.net

Reviewer Spotlight: Missy Paul (MP)

Veruca Salt, American Thighs. By my own estimate, I've listened to this 10-year-old record about 2,000 times. The first thousand spins came within the six months after it was released, when I listened to it nonstop. For my high school sophomore self, Veruca Salt was perfect. They were a flawless blend of girliness, sexuality and aggression, without being over the top. This balance is the reason this album still sounds fresh and the reason I still listen to it on almost a weekly basis. Frontwomen Louise Post and Nina Gordon possess an ability to harmonize and unite their voices into one unique voice. They add their powerful vocals to seriously deep bass lines and power chords. Songs like "Celebrate You," "All Hail Me" and "Get Back" prove they can rock with the best. Their power pop, best heard on "Seether" and "Number One Blind" is classic in the vein of Cheap Trick. The ballads, "Fly" and "Twinstar," are simple songs constructed around their vocal strengths. With each of these songs, you can feel the profound intensity within Post and Gordon. Sally, Veruca Salt was often overlooked or written off in the early '90s Chicago rock explosion and regularly accused of being manufactured. This led to their over-the-top second LP, Fight Arms To Hold You and eventual implosion. Veruca Salt didn't leave a legacy, but they did give us one perfect album, and in my mind Louise, Nina and I will always be best friends forever.

These were the first records I unpacked after my move: Dresden Dolls, 5/F, The Cardigans, Long Gone Daylight, Badly Drawn Boy, One Plus One Is One, All Time Quarterback, 5/F, Fiona Apple, When The Pawn.

Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

Black Flag, My War. From the beginning to the end, there was always a primal, disconcerting wrongness to Black Flag. The riots and violence, the band's relative ambivalence to the violence, the further-out-than-the-rest-of-the-weir-does creepiness of their angry-loser anthems, constant lineup and direction changes: It all added up to a band somewhat accidentally tapping into the worst of human nature despite being a pretty average collection of oddballs. At first it attracted the pent-up and pissed off kids who needed something new and eventually repelled a lot of them. That repulsion started with My War. It's like there's a record that needed to happen between My War and Damaged to bridge the gap, but whether due to the band's legal hassles or something else, that record doesn't exist. Just like driving a car 65 mph and suddenly throwing it into reverse, lots of Flag's former fans buckled and resisted the hell out of My War. Black Flag just had to stay true to the inherent wrongness and slow it down and creepy crawl even more. This record is essential on vinyl, as SST hasn't remastered their catalog, and the CD version doesn't compare (not that the production isn't lo-fi and just kinda weird no matter the format). Plus, this is absolutely a product of the time when music was divided into sides, as side two is all three Sabbath-paced burn-out tracks in all their self-loathing meets self-pity glory (as if lovers of this record have much choice). Get this and get wrong.

Five worthwhile pieces of recent plastic: Dwarves, The Dwarves Must Die; The Red Onions, S/T CDEP; Fleshies, Gung Ho!; The Soviettes, LP II; Totimoshi, Monolí.



Prisoners Dilemma, The - Handshakes, Hello, And Goodbye, CD

More screamo. You know the drill. Music sounds like Iron Maiden with whiny vocals. Bruce Dickinson would be so proud. The only thing I enjoyed was the solemn piano at the end of the album. (SJ)

Indianola Records, 649 S. Henderson Rd., Apt. B106, King of Prussia, PA 19406, www.indianolarecords.com

Pushcar - The Social Side Of Midnight, CD

The first thing to notice about *The Social Side Of Midnight* is the guy with the moustache on the cover of the record, which gives listeners a clue as to what to expect. This is pleasant rock by men with moustaches—and lots of 'em. I especially enjoyed tracks one and three. (JG)

Tarantism Records, 2801 Ocean Park Blvd., Ste. 338, Santa Monica, CA 90405, www.tarantism.com

Rachael's Surrender - RS, CDEP

Describing themselves as dark-pop, but without a hook to be heard, Rachael's Surrender play bland rock with out-of-place, operatic female vocals and some thrown-in synths. The last song is their goth-pop exploration, which is as generic as Hot Topic and just as annoying to endure. (AJA) Self-released, www.surrender.com

® Radian - Juxtaposition, CD

Radian, from Vienna, is a three-piece that is an excellent combination of electronica programming with live instrumentation. In fact, it's difficult at times to tell the boundaries between the two. These compositions are calculating and methodical, with well-timed pacing on each piece. The result is deep grooves of drum and bass crusted with grinding electronic statics that are never jarring. Within these thick textures, the lows are substantially felt, while other sounds seem quite distant. Still, there are yet other sounds, quiet and subtle, that appear inside your head as if no one else can hear them. As the title indicates, these types of juxtapositions are present throughout these compositions. The overall sound is helped by the adept production of John McEntire of Tortoise. After my first listen, I played it through three times straight. My main complaint is that I wish it were longer. (BA)

Thrill Jockey Records, Box 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

Ratchets, The - S/T, CDEP

According to the onesheet, this was recorded in 14 hours after the band had only practiced together four times. The result is 12 minutes of Rancid-esque, ska-laced punk—kind of catchy, but nothing special. Maybe The Ratchets should have taken their time to come up with something unique. (LW) Chunksaah Records, PO Box 974, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, www.chunksaah.com

Ravi – Designing New Circles, CD

Right when I want to dismiss this as another boring emo-pop record, they break into a faster/heavier song to change my opinion. The upbeat songs on here are really good; the rest are boring in a Get Up Kids kind of way. (DA) Emergence Records, 29 Rue le Nostre 76000 Rouen, France, www.emergencerecords.fr.st

Ravi - We Also Are What We Have Ruined, CDEP

Take some very early Piebald recordings and splice them up with some very early Hot Water Music recordings, and then play some high-powered pop punk over it all. What you get is something that is very bad. (MG)

Emergence Records, C/o Vincent Troplain, 29 Rue Le Nostre, 7600 Rouen, France,

www.emergencercords.fr.st

Rebuilthangartheory - With Hurricane Blows, CD

Made up of the "best of" Rebuilthangartheory from 1995 to 2001, this album includes released, unreleased, studio and home-recorded songs. It's a good collection of Midwestern emo-inflected indie-rock songs for the fan or as an introduction to a first-time listener. (AJA)

Plays-Rite Records, www.plays-rite.com

P Red Planet - We Know How it Goes, CD

Sweet-sounding power pop with just enough hardness to keep it from being saccharine. The press release says the band pulls "from such diverse pop, new wave and rock influences as Cheap Trick and The Cars to The Undertones, The Boys and The Real Kids." That sounds accurate to me. There is a song about a goth girl who leads someone to a cemetery to make out that hit home for me (one of the first dates with my ex). For the most part, I liked this, but there were some overly poppy parts that made me wish they would be over soon. (JJG) Gearhead Records, PO Box 421219 San Francisco, CA 94142, www.gearheadrecords.com

Red Swan - After The Barn Goes, CD

Mid-'80s SST fans take note: This band's for you. This fractured murk-blues unit churns out the kind of damaged, addled, psyche-post-punk sprawl. Tightly wound, bass-driven songs wriggle and squirm underneath talk/sing vocals imparting a sense of unease. This boom-thwap will hit you right in the no-no. Yes, yes. (RR)

Isoxys Records, 227 North Magnolia Ave., Lansing, MI 48912, www.isoxys.com

Replicator - You Are Under Surveillance, CD

Excessive sampling and a childish reliance on foul language put a damper on Replicator's otherwise enjoyable songs. The Oakland trio play politically inclined, Albini n' friends-style angular post-punk. Fans of the mentioned genre (Shellac, The Jesus Lizard) should enjoy Replicator's solid, somewhat twisted take on the frequently mimicked sound. (BM)
Substandard Records, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Rescue - Flamingo Minutes, CDEP

After an electrifying opening track like "I Am The Queens Of Comparison," you can't help but expect good things of the newest EP from Detroit's Rescue. Soon enough however, Flamingo Minutes Iulls itself into the typical post-punk attack currently churned out by dozens of bands. It's one thing not to have the talent, but it's something else completely not to utilize it. My advice for Rescue is to try to tap that resource instead of settling to make second rate Glassjaw songs. (MS)

the Prisoners Dilemma / Robotnicka

Slowdance Records, PO Box 11223 Portland, OR 97211 www.slowdance.com

Respira - This Is Not What You Had Panned, CDEP

Indie legend J. Robbins produced this five-song EP by this Southern California band, and it's a good match. The songs are just catchy enough while retaining that subtle, layered menace common to so many of the other great bands Robbins has worked with. A band worth watching. (DAL)

Grey Flight Records, 16458 Bolsa Chica St., #409, Huntington Beach, CA 92649

Reverend Horton Heat – Revival, CD

If you've yet to experience the fiery rockabilly gospel of the Rev, here's a great place to start. Jim "Reverend Horton" Heath & company have been layin' it down like a locomotive for awhile now, and *Revival*is, cut-for-cut, one of their consistently best albums to date. This is rock that rolls. It's boogie and fast-as-hell jump rhythms with some distorted, twanged-out Chuck Berry and Link Ray riffs. It's a simple formula, but the trio's chops make the execution oh so effective. "Indigo Friends," "Callin' In Twisted" and the great ballad about Heath's recently deceased mother, "Someone In Heaven," are gonna break the "previous track" button on your CD player. Plus, this release comes with a bonus DVD featuring a few live performances and a documentary about the Rev's early days in Texas. (AJ)

Yep Roc Records, PD Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Ride The Blinds - S/T, CD

Do you miss Cream? Yeah? You'll cream (worst pun!) yourself for these guys. This blues-rock hybrid could have been recorded over 30 years ago and fit right in, yet it doesn't sound dated. Neat trick. At points it's also reminiscent of an amped up Creedence. (RR)

Klepto Records, 3470 19th St., San Francisco, CA 94110, www.kleptorecords.com

Robotnicka – Spectre En Vue, CD

Punk/electro spazzoid bands have every right to create a series of synthesized hissy-fits dressed up in pop bravado and call it an album. So that's just what France's Robotnicka did. It's not revolutionary, but their French female vocalist has enough appeal for the entire outfit. (CC) Bloodlink, 4434 Ludlow St., Philiadelphia, PA 19104, www.bloodlink.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

The Misfits, Walk Among Us. After recently watching streaming video of Glenn Danzig getting punched out, I popped in my copy of this CD. The Misfits' catalogue is a frustrating mish-mash of lineup changes and different versions of songs, and it mostly lacks anything "definitive" for a band who really only found popularity after disbanding in 1983 (their "reformation," sans Danzig notwithstanding). This 1982 record is about as close as you'll come, though. The Misfits are legendary for a lot of reasons, and this record showcases their awesome melodic punk that was totally simple—there's nothing technical about its delivery or writing. Still, Danzig's great vocal bellows, with the silly B-horror-movie lyrics, and awesome group harmonies aren't to be missed. These guys are a bunch of jokers for sure, but it's campy fun, and the music is catchy as hell. Even though Danzig went on to take his "dark" image to a cartoonish level, there's no denying he has a powerful voice, and it really gives this record an edge that it would lack without him. Check the group vocals in "Hatebreeders." "All Hell Breaks Loose" is a great early '80s hard-core song, and opener "20 Eyes" sets the tone perfectly for what's to come. The album gets a lot sillier toward the end (see "Astro Zombies" and "Braineaters"), but like I said, it's all part of the fun. The Misfits are my Kiss. I'll piss on Gene Simmons' grave when that guy finally croaks, but The Misfits will always get my respect with my fist in the air.

Also getting the fist in the air: Channels, Open (reviewed this issue); Straylight Run, S/T; Quicksand, Manic Compressiorr, Patton Oswalt, Feelin' Kinda Patton (reviewed this issue); Rise Against, Siren Song Of The Counter Culture.

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

Goo Goo Dalls, Hold Me Up. I know their past has been overshadowed by soft-rock movie-soundtrack ballads and their dreamy singer, but at one time these guys were actually a great power-pop band. Of course, people also accused them of being Replacements rip-offs way back then. You just can't please some people. Hold Me Up was the Goos' third album, and I think their best, period. They still had a punk edge, but they were at their songwriting peak before they started working on "hits" and ballads more. But any song on this CD would fit well on a '90s mix tape right alongside Samiam, Knapsack or Jawbreaker. Each band has a similar sense of punky, melodic guitar riffs and tuneful vocals. On this album bassist Robby was still singing a lot of the songs, which were the harder ones. And his rumbling bass was always prevalent, similar to bands like the Descendents or All. But John's songs made up for their softness with the more heartfelt, catchy tunes. On one song, "Hey," they even share vocals, alternating lines. It's too bad they couldn't have collaborated more in down the line. Besides the great, original songs on this album, there's a great cover of "Million Miles Away" and Prince's "Never Take The Place Of Your Man," which features guest vocals by a local blues singer who used to sing random covers with them back in the day. I can understand people's disdain for the band now, but the first three Goo Goo Dolls albums are great melodic punk souvenirs of a band that lost their way. Don't hate the player.

We Miss You, Taffy: Mclusky The Difference Between Me And You; Uniform Choice/Unity Alt; Sinkhole, Alt, Monsula, Sanitized, Undertow, Everything, Night Ranger, Live; Descendents "Here With Me."

the Roots of Orchis / Sextodecimo

Roots Of Orchis, The - Crooked Ceilings, 2xCD

The Roots Of Orchis meld jazz-based instrumentation with synthetic soundscapes, creating great music for a mind drift. What's even better are their remixes. This set's second disc opens up the band's base to elements of trance and electronica, letting their flair for eclectic song structure shine through. (CC) Slowdance, PO Box 11223, Portland, OR 97221, www.slowdance.com

RTX - Transmaniacon, CD

Jennifer Herrema of Royal Trux fame steps up with an impressive offshoot album. Under the codename RTX, she's put together a group of maniacally recorded, massive rock songs, complete with riffs a-blazing, drug sass and consistently offthe-wall effects. Provocative and fun, this one is for the rockers with brains. (BM) Draw City. PO Box 476867. Chicago. IL 60647, www.drawcity.com

Ruark - Blue Heart Tattoo, CD

Lo-fi acoustic musings in the vein of Bright Eyes, but with half the lyrical wit. The upbeat songs ("Catalina") work much better than the morose ("Never Better"), but even then the album suffers from a lack of coherence and imagination. Here's hoping the next record is a bit more consistent. (BN) Self-released, www.ruarkmusic.com

Rum Runner - Association, CD

Solid old school street/oi with a "rough around the edges" approach, paying homage to blue-collar lifestyle and old Irish pub musicians. The fact that the album contains two killer renditions of classics penned by Shane McGowan tells you where Rum Runner's heart and conviction lies. (BN) Longshot Music, PO Box 72, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211 www.longshotmusic.com

Rutabega, The - These Knotty Lines, CD

For those of us who loved the Elephant 6 collective, The Rutabega provides their second full-length. The saccharine melodies wrap around the poppy hooks, while the jangly guitars build up to the la-la-la's, drawing you into each song. The album isn't perfect, but it's a great start. (MP) Johann's Face Records, PO Box 479164, Chicago, IL 60647, www.johannstace.com

Rux, Carl Hancock - Apothecary Rx

Rux is a critically acclaimed African-American poet, playwright and musician. Presented here are lush landscapes of symphonic and electronic song structures in gospel church settings. The prescription also reached deep into the influences of jazz, blues and soul music. He reminds me a little of Ben Harper. It's a really great CD. (DI)

Glant Step Records, 62 White St, Ste 3R,NY , NY 10013, www.glantstep.net $\,$

Sad State of Affairs - S/T, CDEP

This CD offers up six songs of pissed-off hardcore played in the East Coast/Boston style with a slight metal influence. This is pretty good and all, but if I were going to listen to something like this I'd just pull out my American Nightmare records. (KM)

Spook City Records, PO Box 34891, Phlladelphia, PA 19101, www.spookcityusa.com

Safes, The - Boogie Woogie Rumble, CDEP

I know think that all unknown bands should record CDEPs; I really got into this disc. Taking five songs recorded with Jim Diamond and releasing it as Boogie Woogie Rumble was the way to go. Great straight-ahead rock 'n' roll that would have fit into an early '90s Estrus bill. (EA)

Pro-Vel Records, PO Box 5182, St. Louls, MO 63139, www.provelrecords.com

Pro-yel Records, Po Box 5102, St. Louis, No 05159, www.provenecords.com

Safety In Numbers - In The Key Of D, CD

Although this record is founded on tame, octave-heavy power pop, there are some extra guts behind it that I can't quite put a finger on. Maybe it's the rock-tinted hot licks, maybe it's the chunked up overdrive production, but suddenly whiny pop-punk sounds a lot tougher than it really is. (BM) Triple Crown, 331 W. 57th St., #472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

Saperstein, Heidi – Zara, CD

Accessible yet defiant, Saperstein's songs change direction enough to keep the listener's attention for the most part. With shifts in tempo, changing keys and Saperstein's alluring vocals, the album steers clear of monotony at times when it seems doomed to crash. (AJA)

Kimchee Records, 6 Sagamore Rd., Ipswich, MA 01938, www.kimcheerecords.com

Sarcevic, Nikola – Lock-Sport-Krock, CD

Millencollin frontman goes the acoustic route dabbling in folk, lo-fi and pop. The sluggish melodies and emotional writing can't hide the lack of direction. I don't know what motivated Sarcevic to go this route, but I hope he's over it. Unless you're a die-hard Millencollin fanatic, you shouldn't bother. (BN) Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026 www.epitaph.com

Saturday Looks Good To Me - Every Night, CD

Pleasant, orchestral pop reminiscent of present day Belle And Sebastian. A nice balance of both California sunshine and maudlin mid-'90s Euro-rock, Saturday Looks Good To Me can lament and bop with the best of them. Much like their Scottish brethren, *Every Night* is filled with unique, lyrical narratives and more instruments than you could shake a stick at. Vibraphone? Check. Glockenspiel? Check. I mean, if the union of rock and glockenspiel isn't enticing, I frankly don't know what is.(MS)

Polyvlnyl Records, PO Box 7140 Champaign IL 61826, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Scream Club - Don't Bite Your Sister, CD

Part hip-hop funk and part riot grrl cheer rock, Scream Club's Cindy Wonderful and Sarah Adorable are self-proclaimed "gaysymmetrical superheroes." With the raunchiness of Peaches and the seriousness of Le Tigre, this duo from Olympia bounces back and forth from lesbian sex rhymes to political rallies. In each song, their flow is smooth, and their beats are infectious and ass-shaking. They get some help along the way from the likes of Tara Jane O'Neil, Mirah, Beth Ditto, Busdriver and Tobi Vail. These combine efforts help create a catchy, sing-along debut. Standout tracks on *Don't Bite Your Sister* are "Don't Fuck With My Babies," "What You Gonna Do" and "If You Want It." The CD only falters with the comedy songs about acne and potty training, but even these songs still have a good groove. These girls are well on their way, and I want more. (MP)

Tiny Sensational Records / self-released, www.screamclub.com

Sedaced − Eh, CDEP

A former member of Broccoli, Shonben, Dead Inside, keeps his (and Newest Industry's) track record consistent with a new band and EP. With Scott again on vocals, this sounds like a continuation of Shonben, but with new members, a second guitarist and better production, there are some differences. They start out with a foundation of classic English punk, which translates into mature pop played with intensity. The vocals are very steady and melodic, and the music is semi-poppy, but a little darker than most English punk. There's a thick bass sound, which I always enjoy, and the guitars have a slight D.C. tinge to them. Maybe along the lines of fellow Englan-

ders, K-Line. Another great dose of English punk, which is all I'd need to read from this review. But I'm a simple man. (NS)

Newest Industry, Unit 100, 61 Wellfield Rd., Cardiff, CF24 3DG, UK, www.thenewestindustry.com

See Venus – Hard Times For Dreamers, CD

Delicate and precocious female vocals dominate this sunny, orchestral pop debut. With simple drumbeats and wistful keyboards, the songs float along effortlessly in a dreamy manner. There isn't much variation, but the band doesn't need it. They do what they do, and they do it well. (MP)

March Records, #14, 562 7th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.marchrecords.com

Seger Liberation Army - 2+2=?, 7"

This is the second time I've had the pleasure of reviewing an awesome (and timely) cover of "2+2=?" in my short tenure with *Punk Planet*. This time, it's members of The Dirtbombs, New Bomb Turks, and El Smasho reminding us that Bob Seger wasn't always a total douche. (JC)

Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195, www.bigneckrecords.com

September Is Falling - S/T, CD

Screaming, soaring, self-absorbed, scathing, scampering emo with some metal riffage for extra dramatic effect. This sounds like everything else that sits within the screamy, metallic emo-core camp, only slightly more technically proficient. (MG)

Bad Samaritan Records, PO Box 31006, 725 College St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, www.badsamaritanrecords.com

Sgt. Major - Rich, Creamery Butter, CD

Sgt. Major is Kurt Bloch's new band, and they pick up where his last band, the Fastbacks, left off. Pop songs played in punk-rock style and vice-versa. Great songs, great female vocals, great playing, great recording, great album! (JC)

Book Records, www.bookrecords.com

Sex Maniacs, The – Mean As Hell, CD

I don't know if there is a more appropriate title for this CD than Mean As Hell. Damn right! Bar fights, underage squirrel, jail, rough sex and badattitude—that's The Sex Maniacs. Four British bullies with guitars who worship Venom, Motorhead and Bon Scott-era AC/DC, in that order. Everything else is shite. This isn't punk rock so much as hooligan rock. (According to "Prick," punks are mugs with silly haircuts and dumb clothes.) It may all be a well-cultivated image, but I wouldn't wanna get close enough to find out. These dudes sound dangerous and in desperate need of victims to pummel, rob and laugh at. "Illegal Libido" is a prurient homage to young girls who'd rather consent to satisfying The Maniacs' depraved desires than do algebra homework, and "Sabertooth" is the best swagger rock tune since "If You Want Blood." My new favorite air-guitar record, and one of the best releases of '04. Highly Recommended. (AJ)

Manic Ride Records, PO Box 42593, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.manicriderecords.com

Sextodecimo – The Banshee Screams For Buffalo Meat, CDEP

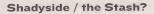
This five-piece band plays mix of doom and death metal with mixed results. Some of the riffs are painfully slow, and combined with ill-fitting, screamed vocals, an eight- or nine-minute tune can get old fast. When it does work, as in the case of "Bethlehem Steel," the results are glorious. (AJ) Hanging Out With The Cool Kids, PO Box 548, Oxford, Oxon OXI TWJ, UK,

www.hangingoutwiththecoolkids.com

Reviewer's Spotlight: Lisa Weingarth (LW)

The Geraldine Fibbers, Butch. When Fibbers' frontwoman Carla Bozulich croons, "Won't you look inside and see what's inside a girl like me?" on track five of the band's 1997 release, you can't help but be intrigued. If Butch provides answer, the response is complex. This album is an explosion of passion, drawn from the rawest emotions—hurt, hate, love, lust, scorn and loneliness. But the fiery fury and vulnerability emitted by Bozulich's sensual, occasionally shrieking growl and soul-baring lyrics is only part of what makes this album great. Musically, it is a genre-bending masterpiece, a stunning blend of punk, noise rock, alt-country and pop, carried off on a bed of strings and the virtuoso guitar-stylings of Nels Cline (currently playing with Wilco). The first song, "California Tuffy," starts out a pop piece with surf-rock tendencies that devolves seamlessly into dissonance and back again. Spitting, seething punk fills out the bulk of the first half, with songs centered on incestuous relationships, prostitution, death and scorned lovers. A couple of very country tunes are thrown in the middle: "Folks Like Me," a Nashvillian story of an impossible love, in which Carla's growl could almost be mistaken for a man's, and the folksy Appalachian-influenced "Pet Angel," which highlights violinist/violist Jessy Green's fiddle prowess. The final stretch segues into even darker territory with the terribly personal and angry tracks "Butch" and "Arrow To My Drunken Eye." And who could forget the snarly, condensed cover of Can's twenty-minute kraut-rock epic "You Doo Right"?

Also listening to: Hot Snakes, Suicide Invoice; Pete Townshend, Empty Glass; The Features, The Beginning; Unbunny, Snow Tires (reviewed this issue). The Holy Fire, S/TEP (reviewed this issue).





Shadyside - Later In The Past, CD

Emotive post-hardcore that *Heartattack* would have eaten up in the mid-"90s. The guitars shift from intricate to forceful in the blink on an eye, while the vocals alternate between the hoarse and a more melodic croon. If you miss VFW shows, Avail backpatches and vegan potlucks, these guys are for you. (NS) Ex-Ex- Records / self-released, 1816 Campus Dr., Fairborn, OH 45724, www.shadvsidemusic.com

Sheehy, Mark - Rock, Paper, Jesus, CD

This bluesy rock 'n' roll belongs on a jukebox in your local dive bar. Sheehy writes quality pub rock centered on booze, redemption and women. Clichéd topics for sure, but Sheehy has a knack for details. In his world, Jesus is nearly homeless, and an adulterer pays his debt by going shoeshopping. (TM)

Seif-released, www.marksheehy.com

Shot Baker - Awake, CD

This is so rad. Pegboy's *Strong Reaction* instantly came to mind, along with Naked Raygun and Avail, when I popped in this CD. Tracks 11-15 are from their *Time To Panic*EP, which officially includes my new favorite song, "Sorry Illinois." This is sing-along punk that you just can't pass up. (TK) Underground Communiqué, 1220 W. Hood Apt 1, Chicago, IL 60660, www.undercomm.org

Shouting Myke – For Your Pleasure, CDEP

Anthem rock with radio-friendly production and an obsession with heavy rock made apparent by the swirling guitars and grungy vocals. It's not horrible, just way too bland for my taste. There's way too much music akin to this getting heavy rotation play as it is. (BN)

Hanging Out With The Cool Kids Records, 19 Ripington Drive, Marston, Oxford OX3 ORH, UK, www.hangingoutwiththecoolkids.co.uk

Sick 56 - Recipe For Disaster, CD

Sick 56 are a decent British hardcore band with lots of mosh potential. The lyrics are pretty much standard fare, however. I would recommend this to hardcore fans of Agnostic Front and GBH. (SJ)

JSNTGM Records, PO Box 1025, Blackpool FY30FA UK, www.jsntgm.com

Sick Fits - Mirror Creeps, 7"

Often touted as a '77-style punk band, the Sick Fits are one of Canada's hidden treasures. This three-track single is their best yet, reaching a maturity in their sound and delivery. The better parts of rock 'n' roll and garage are satisfied without selling their souls to either. (EA)

Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195, www.bignecrecords.com

Silkworm − It'll Be Cool, CD

After over 15 years of existence, it's somewhat amusing that the first track on Silkworm's ninth album is entitled "Don't Look Back." Strong and as consistent as ever, the band's latest release is an inventive and lightning-charged record, one that will again redefine the limits for their post-rock and indie contemporaries. It'll Be Cool starts in with a couple irresistible, full steam ahead, catchy power tracks, then moves into a mellower and abstractly orchestrated mid-section, finally being resolved, loud and guitar-heavy at the finale. Effectively crafting and playing their songs by peculiar, yet inviting means, Silkworm knows how to carry their artistic integrity while always keeping the ever-important grassroots of pop clearly in sight. (BM)

Six Parts Seven. The - Everywhere And Right Here, CD

Starting slowly and reaching climax midway, Everywhere And Right Here's instrumental songs move in and out from each other without defining a clear pattern. Despite song titles and pauses, the songs seem not to have a beginning or an end. I would have loved for this to be a solid 45-minute block of music, never taking time for a breath. Nevertheless, The Six Parts Seven's post-rock is generally more minimal than other same genre outfits, but not entirely. They create a much fuller, dynamic sound on such tracks as "Saving Words For Making Sense" and "This One Or That One," which ends with a bare-bones pitter-pat of piano keys dosing the song. This interplay and instrumental subtlety make for some pretty music, worth paying attention to. (AJA) Suidide Squeeze, PO Box 80511, Seattle, WA 98108, www.suicidesqueeze.net

Six Reasons To Kill / Absidia - Morphology Of Fear, split CD

I was *so* ready to hate this. The lyrics and art are such typical for cheesy heavy music that it was the last thing I reviewed. However, I can't deny the power and gripping brutality of the music. Both bands play ripping, dense metal/grind that compels rather than repels. (RR)

Bastardized Recording, PO Box 200521, 56005 Kobienz, Germany, www.bastardizedrecordings.de

Sk8 Or Die – Not In My Skatepark, CD

I think my *Thrasher Skate Rock T* cassette sounds better than this recording of skate thrash. Almost all of their songs deal with skating or hating in-line skaters. With more practice and some varied topics, these guys could be decent. I wonder if there will ever be a Segway punk movement. (NS) Hill Billy Stew, PO Box 82625, San Diego, CA 92138-2625, www.hillbillystew.com

Skarp - Bury Your Dead, CD

This is some of the doomiest, gloomiest, eeriest metal/grindcore | have ever heard. Although it's not the most technically proficient, I give them huge props for their overwhelming assault on the metal senses. *This* is hardcore. (MG) Inlimital Records, c/o Mike Crow, 1426 Harvard Ave., #103, Seattle, WA 98122, www.inlimical.com

Skew Whiff - Taedium Vitae, CD

These Belgians kick out the dark, low-end European-style hardcore with lightning-fast riffs and occasional Cookie Monster growls. I feel like I've heard this album already, but I'm not sure why. I really dug the lyrics on this one: intelligent, political and dark as all hell. (KM)

Life is Abuse, PO Box 20524, Oakland, CA 94620, www.lifeisabuse.com

Sleepwalker Defense – Weddings And Funerals, CDEP

I think there's a school somewhere in the Midwest teaching legions of boys to play instruments well, but to create a sound that is musically and vocally interchangeable. This isn't bad, but it sounds like every other band that's been on the cover A.P. recently. I don't get it. (MP)

Go Deaf Records / self-released, www.sleepwalkerdefense.com

🦻 Slim Cessna's Auto Club - The Bloudy Tenent Truth Peace, CD

The first song tells it straight: "This is how we do things in the country." These guys from Denver break out dark, gospel-fueled country singing about rock 'n' roll preachers, thorny crowns and murder. With banjo, mandolin and some yodeling, they have elements of bluegrass, though they also have edgy guitars and quick-step drums fitting for a smoky city bar. Slim Cessna's stories carry you through these songs, and plenty of the Auto Club members are willing to sing backup. They are at their best when they're raucous, vowing to sing until "the floods come to wash us, float away." They sound like they would put on a blast of a live show. (BA)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

9 Sluts Of Trust - We Are All Sluts Of Trust, CD

Sluts Of Trust took me by surprise, as I never thought!'d like another twopiece band again. Cheater Slicks made it simple, Bantam Rooster did it the
best, and the White Stripes made it cool and popular. So reluctantly I put
this at the bottom of my pile of things to review, it just looked so glossy.
Well, slap me upside the head and call me an idiot because this san indulgent piece of rock 'n' roll. The opening track, "That's Right...That Cat's
Right," has a great minimal guitar riff, and John McFarlane sings like Albini mixed with the Cramps, which sold me on first listen. Normally, discs
with such diversity and sounds/influences are not easy to put together,
though having a two-piece keeps it all sounding tight. Sluts Of Trust take
the better parts of '70s rock, stuff it down the front of their pants and grind
their crotches in your face. Have your dollar bills ready, baby. (EA)

Chemikai Underground Records, PO Box 3609, Glasgow, G42 9TP, UK, www.chemikai.co.uk

Smoosh − She Like Electric, CD

Smoosh's masterful mix of the pop song gamut—clever rap song ("Rad"), spry disarming ballad ("About The Picture"), poignant portrait ("Make It Through"), and mischievous play ("The Quack")—could never be as fearless if it weren't made by ladies who encapsulate the same qualities. The Smoosh sisters, Asya (age 12 on keys/vocals) and Chloe (age 10 on drums),

have turned their piano and drum lessons into an incredibly original record. They're, no doubt, musicians with a long and fruitful future ahead. Not to mention that they've already opened for Death Cab For Cutie and Sleater-Kinney. Aside from all that, Smoosh are totally the perfect heroes for all those young ladies waiting to make their rock 'n' roll dreams come true. (CC) Pattern ZS Records, 610 20th Ave. E, Seattle, WA 98112, www.pattern25.com

Snake The Cross The Crown, The - Mander Salis, CD

This album is all over the place. One song is overachieving prog rock, while the next sounds remarkably like The Walkmen. Then there are the acoustic alt-country songs, the best tracks on the CD. This is a flawed album, but the band has great potential if they make up their minds. (MP)

Equal Vision Records, PO Box 38202. Albany, NY 12203, www.equalivision.com

Solace Bros., The - I Think Of You, CD

Here is a lo-fi-sounding guitar, keys and drums with some pretty funny lyrics. The songs are light and poppy with lots of harmonies and lush guitar melodies. It was recorded by Jim Waters who has worked with Jon Spencer and RL Burnside. I really enjoyed listening to this CD. (DI)

Self-released www.thesolacebros.com

Space Robot Scientists – Aggro Disco, CDEP

Crazy, electrified punk rock with a whimsical appeal. A barrage of beat-ridden synths and sequencers kick out these angular punk dance-jams, which are influenced more by 1980's greats Devo and Pil. than the obscure postpunk acts that most bands are trying to emulate today. Definitely a surprisingly fun record. (MG)

Space Robot Scientists, 71 Pawnee Dr., Commack, NY 11725, www.spacerobotscientists.com

Speed Not Steel / Hidari Mae - split, 2xCD

Speed Not Steel's six songs stand out in this set: clean folk-pop with catchy hooks and an orchestral quality. I found myself rehashing the chorus to "Anything Isn't Everything" in my head more than once. Hidari Mae's half is a sleeper, a watered-down Death Cab for Cutie. (LW)

Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Drive, Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Splintered Tree And The Sweet Leaf Boys – Dark Town, 7"

This crew's A-side of good ol' boy garage rock is straight shootin' and fun.

Although, the B-side's "Shit Do Stink" gets all mixed up with electronic tricks and a super pop bridge. (There's no need to mention the lame lyrics.)

These boys are better off stickin' to what they know. (CC)

Self-released, 1474 9th St., Oakland, CA 94607, www.splinteredtreee.com

Split Lip Rayfield – Should Have Seen It Coming, CD

Split Lip Ray's music is an amphetamine- and bourbon-laced version of bluegrass with lots of vocal harmonizing on subjects like guns, cocaine, brawls and trucks, plus the obligatory busted heart love ballads. The overall songwriting could be a bit stronger, but these guys can really play their asses off. (AJ)

Bloodshot Records, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

9 Start, The - Initiation, CD

The Start's gothic melodies, synths and double-paced drum beats have earned them the typical new wave references, but that hopelessly underestimates their brazen energy and inescapable talent for melding the sounds—guttural organic and explosive electric—that make their shadowy songs so mesmerizing. Their style is embodied by vocalist Aimee Echo's tremolo: raw and raspy, operatic and punk. If comparisons are necessary then Jane's Addiction might be a better fit for The Start's uncanny lyrics, the murky echoes of Jamie Miller's guitar, and the let-up/lunge of Billy Brimblecom (drums) and Erick Sanger's (bass) rhythm section. *Initiation* marks a kind of rebirth for the band and proves them to be the source of stellar songs for those of us who prefer to dance in the dark. (CC)

Nitro Records, 7071 Warner Ave, Suite F736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.nitrorecords.com

Stash?, The - Livin The High-Life, CD

This is some deranged-ass punk rock. They from fast punk to hardcore to death metal to southern rock to an odd cover of "Darling Nikki." The singer

has a good voice that adapts to each style effortlessly with a deep, soulful bellow. Interesting and worth checking out. (NS)

C-Rap Records, www.c-rap.com

Stationary Odyssey / El Boxeo - split, 7"

A couple of funsongs. Stationary Odyssey's "Spongelike Wonderland" is programmed drums, samples, toy piano and guitar with the monotone of a doctor's health advisory for vocals. El Boxeo's track, "My Role At The Party Is...," is violin backed by bass and percussion for a jovial instrumental. (BA) Boy Arm, PO Box 304, Birmingham, MI 48012-0304, www.boyarm.com

Statues - Aux., CD

Says here these guys only practice on Thursdays. If I could, I'd give them another day each week just to see if the three or four boring-as-hell songs could turn out like the others—short and punchy, Ted Leo-esque, but done all Canadian. Good lyrics and hooks of note. (SM)

Self-released, 100 David St., Sudbury, ON P3E 1T1, Canada, www.statues.ca

Steel Pier Sinners - Wicked, CDEP

Steel Pier Sinners are a thoroughly rockin', unpretentious punk band out of New Jersey. It's not so much "late night, drunk at the hip dive bar" music as it is "Saturday, backyard barbecue at twilight" music—toddlers bopping around to the beats, oblivious to the social messages being thrown in husky-voiced Trina "T-Bird" Scordo's lyrics, while their parents put back a few cold ones and howl requests for Steve Earle covers. There are hints of country, funk and Mudhoney (especially in lead guitarist Meagan Brothers' slide work) stirred into their blue-collar, garage rave-ups like "American Standard" and "Faithless." The only downside to this eight-song EP is the production value. These songs are great, and with a little more muscle in the mix, they'd carry more weight. Nevertheless, an excellent release that makes you wanna hear much more of the Sinners. (AJ)

Self-released, www.steelpiersinners.com

Stepsister – Black Hearts Bleed Red, CD

When an odds-and-sods collection for a band you've never heard before is this listenable, that's a good sign. This greasy, hoarse rock/punk slides and sweats around your ears like a truck stop breakfast does in your guts. Outtakes and live radio broadcasts make up most of this disc, so a couple songs are repeated. (RR)

Red Hour Records, PO Box 44302, Cleveland, OH 44144

Stereo South – Justamere Road, CD

Members of Horace Pinker display their sensitive side by playing pleasant indie rock/pop full of hooks and acoustic/electric interplay. If you're not too cool to admit being a fan of The Cure and still give your Smiths records a spin, this record should provide you some quality entertainment. (BN) Offtime Records, PO Box 479176, Chicago, IL 60647 www.offtime.com

Stray Bullets - ...The Slings And Arrows Of Outrageous Fortune, CD

This is the first ska/punk band I've liked in awhile. The ska parts are more consistent, instead of just being breakdowns. The recording stays aggressive and thick, while the band is still tight and polished sound. They sound a bit like Op Ivy/Rancid/Sublime, but still have punk cred. (DM)

Fork In Hand, PO Box 230025 Boston, MA 02125, www.forkinhand.com

Suffering And The Hideous Thieves - Rats In Heaven, CD

This CD might appeal to people who like Tom Waits or Sixteen Horsepower. It's heart-wrenching, pseudo-gypsy music with a little Nick Cave and other varied influences thrown in. While beautiful, there is a sadness underlying the brightness of the songs. All the musicians are great, using old acoustic instruments and sounding as powerful as anything electrified. I would recommend this for anyone who is having a drunk and depressed 3 a.m. (JJG)

Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Drive, Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Summer of '92 - Bullet, CDEP

Acoustic hardcore along the lines Rumbleseat (Hot Water Music solo stuff). The personal lyrics are hauntingly honest. Not to be a dick, but to tell you

the truth, I'm a little worn out on that whole scene right now. Just listen to Uncle Tupelo. It's way better. (TK)

Bad Samaritan Records, PO Box 31006, 725 College St. Toronto, ON M66 1CO Canada,

Swingin' Utters - Live In A Dive, CD

The sixth (already!) in Fat Wreck's live series is also the best. Featuring a band that's as good live as in the studio and far more comfortable there, the Utters' live record is composed of old favorites ("No Eager Men" "The Dirty Sea" "Catastrophe"), classic covers ("I Got Your Number" "Here We Are Nowhere") as well as some of the band's most recent creations ("Glad" "All That I Can Give"). It's a great set that serves as a reminder of the Utters' powerful live presence and prowess. As with all the previous *Live In A Dive* records, the sound quality is amazing for a live record—even the accordion sounds great—giving the record a clear quality that no bootleg could approach. Fans of the band should pick this up just to hear the stirring live renditions of their old-school favorites. (BN)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, wwwfatwreck.com

🦻 Taking Back Sunday – Where You Want To Be, CD

Taking Back Sunday finds themselves in the unenviable position of not possibly being able to live up to the hype around them. That hype has one benefit at least: a superbly produced, slick record that sounds like it belonged at No. 3 on the Billboard Top 200, where it debuted. The guitars sound amazing—they're just huge. Singer Adam Lazzara's voice sounds a bit more even, and aside from not reaching the upper registers he aims for in track four, his vocals have improved. TBS's sound is the torch-bearer of today's screamo/emo, and there's no denying it's catchy as hell: the dual vocals, the harmonies, powerful moments balanced by restraint and buildups. It's an impressive package altogether, and TBS doesn't seem to have missed a beat since the departure of guitarist John Nolan and bassist Shaun Cooper. That said, the dueling vocals between Lazzara and Fred Mascherino and lyrical repetition are often overdone (see tracks three and five). Track six, "New American Classic," is an ill-advised acoustic song that would have been better left to a bonus unlisted track, if included at all. Toward the end of the album, it sounds repetitious and slightly formulaic. Still, the formula works—the kids eat this shit up with a spoon. TBS's sophomore effort, though flawed, works. (KR)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Terminal Youth - Shit Fit!, 7"

If your looking to add to your thrash collection, this a good record to get: an 11-song 7" of some seriously fast music. Brutal. (SJ) Rich White Kids Records / self-released, 205 Cabot St #3, Beverly, MA 01915,

www.terminalyouth.tk

Tiger Saw – Gimme Danger / Gimme Sweetness, CD

Despite the duets and the occasional organ, bass or banjo, Tiger Saw's latest effort is a lo-fi rock record. At each song's core is frontman Dylan Metrano quietly singing over slow acoustic strumming. Languid and melancholy, the album can linger at times, but overall it's well done and recommended. (MP) Klimchee Records, 6 Sagamore Road, Joswich MA 01938, www.klimcheerecords.com

Time In Malta - Alone With The Alone, CD

Brutal, intense, and pleasantly radio-friendly hardcore-gone-hardrock from these long-standing metalcore boys. If you love the metallic hardcore sound of the good ol' days (Unbroken, Boy Sets Fire, early Cave In, etc.) you will like this. (MG) Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalivision.com

Tower Of Rome − S/T, CD

Holy shit, this band is good. I actually already had this demo from the first time that I saw these kids here in Chicago, so it's my pleasure to review it. Completely insane grind with a low end that would make most tough-guy hardcore bands jealous. Tower of Rome has everything you need to be a good band. Both the snotty scream and the gasoline vocals, chugs, blasts and a great sense of humor to boot. Ten songs in about nine minutes, but nine minutes that you actually want to listen to. I find it funny that their contact info is on Orchid Drive, as there's definitely an Orchid (the band) influence that

I'm feeling. To be honest, there isn't one bad song on this thing. Seek this out immediately, or be out of the loop when they're the talk of your town. (DH) Self-released, 15601 Orchid Drive, South Holland, IL 60473, allfastnoslow@aol.com

Toychestra And Fred Frith - What Leave Behind, CD

Dan Plonsey composed this concerto for guitar and toy instruments: recorders, bugles, xylo-piano and even a zoo train. Live, the six women of Toychestra set their instruments on ironing boards and play in pajamas. Frith's guitar occasionally seems at odds with the toy sounds, but the carnivalesque result is fun. (BA)

S.K. Records, 32 Rue d'Arménie, 69003 Lyon, France, www.skrecords.org

Tragedy Andy - It's Never Too Late To Start Over, CD

I think this band believes something sets them apart from the plethora of emo-pop bands coming out today. Stylistically, that's not really the case, but quality-wise, they're definitely on the more palatable end of the genre. The title track is catchy as fuck. (AE)

PopSmear, 2269 Chestnut St., #970, San Francisco, CA 94123, www.popsmearrecords.com

Trailer Park Tornados - Don't Mind The Maggots, 7"

The force of these—and I mean this affectionately—dirtballs could drive a two-by-four, spun free from a vicious F4 cyclone, straight through a fore-head. They're the kind of noisy, wrongful punk rock that lives for tits and stays around just long enough to suck a keg dry. (SM)

Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195, www.bigneckrecords.com

Treephort - Enchanted Forest, CD

Lyrically inspired by the Descendents and Dead Milkman, Treephort has its tongue planted firmly in its cheek. I'll likely never listen to this record again, which I'm sure is what the band was going for. (RL)

Springman Records, PO Box 2043, Cupertino, CA 95015, www.springmanreocrds.com

Tremors, The - The Scourge Of The South, CD

The Tremors give you average traditional rockabilly. This album is full of wang-doodlin' rockabilly with lyrics about raisin' hell and girls. They are your typical three-piece with an upright bass. They need more variation—by the end this record, the music runs together. (EH)
Brain Drain/self-released, PO Box 77782, Greensboro, NC 27417, www.tremorsrockabilly.com

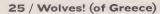
There's nothing brilliant about The Trouble With Sweeney or the band's albumlong explorations of music that is classically American and still strictly their own: from indie-country to their latest incarnation as the modern day Wings. (They even cover "Listen To What The Man Said.") Nevertheless, Joey Sweeney and crew can instinctively tap into whatever the intangible element is that makes us whole-heartedly submit to the joy that those 70s pop- and folk-tinged rock songs inspire. It'd be too easy to say that Sweeney, a music geek/music writer, calculated the sound. Really, it's all become so second nature that the band's delivery couldn't be any more off-the-cuff. Sweeney's even stopped letting his literary lyrics steal the show so the lazy-summer of these songs could shine through. If this is what can happen when a music geek/music writer makes records, I may need to revisit my dream of being words and guitar. (CC)

Troubled Hubble - Broken Airplanes, CD

Having had the pleasure of seeing these four dudes come through my college town what seemed like twice a month, I'm aware that this band is more than just the quirky outfit that sings love songs about canoes and covers "Walking On Sunshine." They're each remarkable musicians who could teach classes. As much as the silly lyrics work in their squishy, trivial way with the stamping and ramping drums-bass-jangly-guitar combo, they're passable until they get under the hot lights. Hubble is a great live band that you'll struggle to find time for in the privacy of your own home. (SM)
The Magic Spot Productions, PO Box 146, River Grove, IL 60171, www.themagicspot.com

Turn Pale - Films We Like / Weapons Training 7"

Snooty dance punk from Washington, D.C., with aggressive vocals, funk-fueled hooks and rapid-fire beats. My only complaint is there aren't more songs. (MP) Ruffian Records, PO Box 5522, Washington, D.C. 20016, www.ruffian





25 - Electric Synthetized Diethylamid, CD

25 gives you snotty garage rock with old-school punk flavor. The recording is very lo-fi and primal, displaying basic musicianship with pissed, raspy vocals that switch from English to French. At times it's a little artsy, which redeems it, but it's nothing flashy though—just average rock. (EH) Lo-Fi Records, 2 rue Socrate, 13001 Marseille France

Two If By Sea - Translations, CD

The only reason Two If By Sea hasn't played with The Faint (though they've shared the stage with Radio 4, Q And Not U and ImaRobot) is because I think they *are* The Faint. Angular, new wave-inspired rock from Baltimore—and good shit at that. (JG)

Speedbump Records, 2604 Fait Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21224, www.speedbumponline.com

9 Unbunny - Snow Tires, CD

Jarid del Deo, Unbunny frontman, has a real talent for spinning poignant and poetic lyrics that masterfully match imagery with emotion. In *Snow Tires*, Del Deo runs through the feelings that go along with losing love and actualizes them by setting the scene in a small town. The bittersweet reminiscing in the first track, "Casserole," establishes the tone for the album: "I'm in the backyard burning leaves in a barrel/ for the prettiest girl in all of the motor court." "FM," one of the most outstanding tracks, is an unset-tiling lullaby for the lonely, complete with a children's choir. The title track ends the album with the pain the narrator feels when he spots his ex's car in a bar parking lot. Fuzzy, electric guitar and soft piano and synths carry the album's hollow feel. A fantastic work, this album's moving simplicity is akin to Elliott Smith and *Harvest*-era Neil Young. (LW)

Parasol, 303 W. Griggs St., Urbana, IL 61801, www.parasol.com

Uncut - Those Who Were Hung Hang Here, CD

This Canadian release mixes the right amount of drone, feedback and dance to make atmospheric rock. But Uncut owe a lot to Joy Division and Television. By a lot, I mean splitting all profits with these forefathers of modern rock. Unoriginal, but because of the influences, very enjoyable. (MP)
Paper Bag Records, Ste. 306, 455 Spadina Ave., Toronto, ON MSS 268, Canada,
www.paperbagrecords.com

Under One Flag / Another Way - split, CD

By the time I was in high school, hardcore was long over. Had this album been around in the late '90s, the hardcore kids at my school would have traded a Victory Records shirt for it, or used it as bounty for beating up the drama kids and/or meat eaters. (RL)

NGS Records, PO Box 334, Westmont, IL 60559, www.ngsrecords.com

Underground Society - Redemption, CD

Cheese metal, alternarock and punk don't mesh well. Here's some more proof (RR)

Self-released, www.undergroundsociety.com

Unit F - Security, CDEP

Just when I thought I made it through an issue of *Punk Planet* without a single bad CD to review, this turd comes along to ruin my day. Despite the excellent production by Greg Hetson, the horrid metal trudge played by these guys is just plain terrible. (AE)

Finger Records, 18092 Sky Park Circle, #51A, Irvine, CA, 92614, www.fingerrecords.com

Vandals, The - Hollywood Potato Chip, CD

It's apparent now that The Vandals have lost the funny...All that remains is a soulless collection of songs that, at very best, invoke the memories of a time long gone. Don't pick this up unless you've a sinister interest in seeing just how hard the mighty have fallen. (BN)

Kung Fu Records, PO Box 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038, www.kungfurecords.com

∇ Velvet Crush - Stereo Blues, CD

Paul Chastain and Ric Menck have been creating music together for some 20 years, and sometimes it's fun to play a bendy guitar solo, curling lips and pretending the pitch of the notes is causing your face to distort. It's all for the love of empty-calorie pop that Third Eye Blind or The Raspberries stroke off to. It's simple and simply there. (SM)

Action Musik, www.parasol.com

Velvet Teen, The - Elysium, CD

The wait for *Elysium*, the highly anticipated second full-length from Northern California's The Velvet Teen, has been well worth it. Having exiled the sugary guitars and Britpop tendencies of their previous releases in exchange for front and center piano and string sectioned indie epics, the band's already remarkable roster of abilities has been polished into a masterpiece. Spellbinding and unflawed in all of its 48 minutes, *Elysium* is the perfectly suited, tragically beautiful soundtrack for the human condition. Singer Judah Nagler's token angelic vocals have also broadened this time around; while the operatic falsetto parts, somewhat reminiscent of Jeff Buckley, are still present, Nagler frequently branches into his lower registers, giving the songs a darker and more dynamic appeal. Swelling into explosions, then feather-floating back down into abysses, the self-recorded testament that is *Elysium*, in every sense, is a work of massive proportions. This is undeniably one of the year's best records, if not much more. (BM)

Slowdance Records, PO Box 11225, Portland, OR 97211, www.slowdance.com

∇ Venomous Concept − Retroactive Abortion, CD

Sure, it's a "supergroup" with members of the Melvins, Brutal Truth and Napalm Death. What this boils down to, though, is four guys that love '80s style hardcore playing it right. Fast and raw, Venomous Concept keep the songs under two-and-a-half minutes each (OK, "Idiot Parade" is 2:31), simple and aggressive. I really don't know what else to say except that this record is a breath of fresh air amongst all of the boring "hardcore" bands that sing all pretty-like, are fashion-conscious and use heaps of generic melody to get radio airplay. As a "bonus," the disc is enhanced with a completely bizarre video entitled "Total War" of odd footage, including war films, an autopsy and the band's logo a bunch of times. I was expecting an Impaled Nazarene cover, but whatever. Thank you, Ipecac Records! Get this immediately if you miss good, straight-up hardcore. (DH)

Vertical Struts, The – Plans For Her / Blues From An Airplane, 7"

These two songs are sparse garage rock that feature militaristic drumbeats and raspy, abrasive vocals. Each song is quick and to the point. This is their first release, and they're off to a good start. (MP)

The House of Queenie, No. 2 7625-115 St., Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 1N4, Canada

Voids, The - Kill A Generation, CD

The Voids play some blitzkrieg-fast punk rock with awesome lady vocals and clever lyrics that totally caught me off guard. I normally don't go for this type of stuff, but the frenzy and passion with which these guys play demands your attention like a slap in the face. Punk rock! (KM)

Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701, www.drstrange.com

Wasted - Here We Go Again, CD

I was surprised to find out this Finnish band's material is all recent, as their sound had me thinking they existed around the same time as an earlier Black Flag or Minor Threat. The lyrics are also typical for the style: the system sucks, religion sucks, etc. (KM)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Beds, SG9 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Wayouts, The - Let's Start A Band: Frisco-a-go-go 1985, 7"

These two songs, which were recorded live in 1985, comprise the complete catalog of this San Francisco garage band. They're two very likeable songs, sounding influenced by such '60s lo-fi groups as the Kinks ("Take A Walk"), as well as by the grit of '80s punk ("Have Love Will Travel"). (AJA)

J & T Records, 113 U.S. NW (alley), Washington, DC 20001

Waxwings, The – Let's Make Our Descent, CD

For me, the term "best kept secret" is the last thing I'd ever want to be. That's the artist who doesn't sell a painting until after he dies, all of the fat lucre going to relatives who thought he was a good enough guy, but ultimately a failure. It's better to be known during life. The Waxwings strive to be the worst kept secret on their third full-length. They get their neighbor, the brawny and brilliant Brendan Benson to help out, using his basement and liquor cabinet to lay out another grandiose work of sunny sunshine and glittering stars. You won't find any two jacks melding their voices together and getting better results than Dean Fertita and Dominic Romano. They

should have been known when they released Low To The Ground in 2000, forgotten slightly with their second album and then hit everyone like a pail of Arctic water with this one, a combination of the kind of unforsaken rock 'n' roll that gets preserved in time capsules and breezy Haight Street fancies that lock eyes with clouds. (SM)

Rainbow Quartz Records, 440 Ninth Ave., Eighth Floor, Suite 36, New York, NY 10001, www.rainbowquartz.com

We Be The Echo - Cubist Music, CD

Driving instrumental rock not unlike Hella, Lightning Bolt, etc. Unlike those acts however, We Be The Echo have a less abrasive edge and also avoid the sometimes self-indulgent jams that accompany this genre. Short and sweet, *Cubist Music* is one example of "math-rock" that's worth putting into your calculator. (MS) Chuckbeat Records, www.chuckbeat.com

Weaklings, The - Rock-N-Roll Owes Me, CD

Heartbreakers, NY Dolls, AC/DC—you know the formula. Sweat, booze, guitars and amped up scuzz blues. The Weaklings follow in the footsteps of these greats and aren't left looking much the lesser or dated. (RR)

Dead Beat Records, PO Box 283, Los Angeles, CA 90078, www.dead-beat-records.com; Waxvaccine Records, PO Box 40527, Portland, OR 97240, www.angelfire.com/punk4/waxacinerecords

Weapons Of Mass Destruction - Pardovart, CDEP

Despite a name that hints otherwise, Weapons Of Mass Destruction is a rather calm affair. This six-song debut from the New Mexico-based group is quite pretty, with complex little songs and warm keyboard effects adorning the rhythms. (TM)

Self-released, 1230 CRAI, Melrose, NM 88124, www.wmdmusic.com

Windsor For The Derby – We Fight Til Death, CD

With hushed vocals, delicate guitars and a dash of synths, Windsor For The Derby has grown into a fine band for a hipster cocktail party. We Fight Til Death pleasingly ventures into territory that borders on Kraut-rock, with gleaming keyboards and toe-tapping electronic effects. (TM) secretly Canadian, 1021 S. Walnut Bloomington, IN 47401, www.secretlycanadian.com

Wise - S/T, CDEP

David "Wise" Weise should definitely *not* quit his day job. This is the type of stuff your pot dealer plays you before you buy a bag, and you know you gotta grin and bear it *and* say, "Yeah, man! That's really good!" if you want your bud, let alone the "friend" discount. (AJ)

Bubba Jack Records / self-released, www.wiserocks.com

Witnesses, The - Tunnel Vision, CD

I've been listening to Keith Richards' guitar since I was in my mother's womb, so I know rip-off Stones' riffs when I hear 'em. The Witnesses aren't a bad band—they're fun, they can play their instruments, and the songwriting is passable (if a bit hokey). Just ain't the real thing. (AJ) Howler, 31 Union Square West Suite 9A, New York, NY 10003, www.howler-records.com

I have a feeling this ambitious record will get lumped in with emo pretenders, and I also think singer Gordie Muscutt's voice will split listeners into groups of those who like it and those who don't. But this is aggressive, layered post-punk with lots of power and melody, and Muscutt has a unique voice and delivery that's thankfully whine-free. When you add in the strong lyrics, nice instrumental accompaniment that pops up here and there (strings, piano), you have a good album as a result. Opener "Fake Your Death" is especially strong, and track seven, "Until Our Funeral," is another good one. These guys are apparently road warriors, so check them out when they come to your town. I have a feeling it'll be worth the price of admission. (KR)

Post436 Records, 12511 Ringwood Ave., Orlando, FL 32837, www.post436records.com

Wolves! (Of Greece) - S/T, 10"

The recording is full of two noisy guitars with a lot of feedback in the style of Tonie Joy. The bass and drums are a good balance for all the squeaks. With songs on only one side, it's a waste of heavy Czech vinyl, but that's how they do it in the UK. (DI)

Gringo Records, PO Box 7546, Nottingham, NG24WT, UK, www.gringorecords.com

World/Inferno Friendship Society - Speak Of Brave Men, CDEP

Ever get drunk and feel the need to dance a super-fast foxtrot with an inebriated partner? Well this is the perfect soundtrack. Straight-up punk guitar, drums and vocals are accompanied by Jush back-up singers and an assortment of horns, accordion and keys. Altogether it creates a raucous masterpiece. (CC) Gem Blandsten Records, PO Box 356, River Edge, NJ 07661, www.gemblandsten.com

Wormstorm, Markus - Hookers, 12" EP

Markus Wormstorm hails from Capetown, South Africa, and he samples car-tire squeals and Zimbabwean thumb piano (or *mbira*) for his subtle and mellow hip-hop cadences that have touches of house and electronica. This impressive EP has two tracks from an upcoming full-length, plus a couple others. (BA) Sound-link Records, 95 Wyckoff St. #3A, Brooklyn, NY 11201, www.sound-ink.com

Yannis Kyriakides And Andy Moor - Red v Green, CD

This is an interesting combination: Yannis Kyriakides is an freeform electronics manipulator, and Andy Moor is a guitarist from the anarchist art-punk group The Ex, so he's no stranger to improvisation. These tracks are edited from three sessions they did in 2003, forming a long album of both the hypnotic and the erratic: bleeps, glitches and ticks with unpredictable guitar that borders on the edge of the melodic. Overall, it's mostly slow and soundtracky. Evoking deep space along with the strange, this would be perfect background music for reading a Philip K. Dick novel. As foreground, however, many may find it less interesting, unless they are willing to meditate (or vegetate) on it and allow for deepening entrancement. It's nicely packaged and includes a little booklet of Moor's photography. (BA) Unsounds, Wenslauerstraat 59, 1053 AW Amsterdam, The Netherlands, www.unsounds.com

Yearbook - S/T, CD

It makes sense that Yearbook recorded with Jawbox's J. Robbins; they've got the same subtle harmonies as Jawbox and the same sense of song structure and movement. Unfortunately, for all of the band's technical proficiency, the record comes out sounding just a bit flat and lacking intensity. (JG) Dunket Records, c/o GHoy, IZS St. Marks Place, #2, Brooklyn, NY 11217, www.dunketvecords.com

Yeti – Volume, Obliteration, Transcendence, CD

Yeti's dark mix of electric twitches and clamber of terminator bass would be interesting if piecing it together with the occasional metallic growl and melodramatic breakdown didn't make it so trite. Furthering the torture are track times clocking in at over 11 minutes. (CC)

Life Is Abuse, PO Box 20524, Oakland, CA 94620, www.lifelsabuse.com

Young Heart Attack - Mouthful Of Love, CD

Rock only needs a revival if you don't know where to look for it. Still, the last couple years have brought driving hard rock back into focus. As a result, bands like Young Heart Attack are more prevalent, and there's an audience for them. All the best of the old is represented here—AC/DC, ZZ Top, MC5—but it still sounds new. The guitars and drums are loud and big; the vocals (male and female) are raw and soaring. Thankfully, the whole cheeseball "aw, shucks, ain't old hard rock neat?"/Darkness approach is avoided in favor of rock that sounds like it's made by rock fans for rock fans. (RR) XL Recordings, 625 Broadway, T2th Floor, New York, NY 10012, www.xirecordings.com

Youth In Asia - E.P., CDEP

Catchy pop-punk with a big, beefy sound, witty writing and lead vocals eerily reminiscent to those of Goldfinger. In fact, YIA sound a lot like Goldfinger did way back in the day. If YIA make it, tracks like "Crossing Over" and "Same Song" will get them there. (BN) Self-released, www.yiamusic.com

Z/28 - Wrecks From The Highway, CD

Punk rockabilly with a horrible name and not a great sound. I'm being harsh; they sound all right, but are goofy as hell. They even ruin the *Dukes Of Hazard* theme song. Great pin-up girl photo on the cover, though. (DM) JSNTGM, PO Box 1025 Blackpool, PY3 OFA UK, www.jsntgm.com

Zedek, Thalia - Trust Not Those In Whom Without Some Touch Of Madness, (D)

Carrying the somber, warming qualities of singer/songwriter folk, Thalia Zedek's latest endeavor musically shines, but vocally and lyrically sputters. Texturally, the

songs are impressive and stirring, complete with rich piano and cello arrangements, yet her timid voice and insipid poetry put a damper on the record. (BM) Thrill Jockey, PO Box 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

∇/A – The Boss Tuneage Instant Singles Collection Vol. 2, CD

Here's a tough one. I really only liked one of the six bands on this comp. Each band contributed an EP's worth of songs. The bands are from all over the place, too: Rope (England), Innerface (Belgium), Skeeter (NJ), Beauty School Dropout (Scotland), In Harms Way (Canada) and the entire reason to own this CD, The Baby Little Tablets (Japan). I don't just like this band, I love them. As far as I can tell, their three songs are all rereleased from their out-of-print debut tape. They remind me of a Japanese version of Sacramento's The Bananas, with a little bit of an Aaron Cometbus influence. It isn't that the rest of the bands are bad; it's just that after listening to the BLT, everything else on here is a disappointment. You really can't go wrong with the whole thing, though, because for 23 songs (three of them amazing) at the cost of a 7", it is a great deal. While you are on the Boss Tuneage site ordering this singles collection, pick up the BLT full-length, too. (TK) Boss Tuneage, Po Box 74, Sandy, Beds, 569 2WR, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

9 V/A - Confuse Yr Idols: A Tribute to Sonic Youth, CD

This collection is less a tribute to Sonic Youth and more an homage to the variety of experimental music that 23 years of their innovative style has spawned—for better or for worse. When it's good, though, it's good: Translated into this comp's best tracks are Lee Renaldo's frenetic guitars (a swirly, stripped-down "Eric's Trip" from New Grenada), Steve Shelley's pop and hammer (the ever herky-jerky Parts & Labor kicking out a killer "Sugar Kane"), Kim Gordon's deadpan delivery (Rapider Than Horsepower's toy-piano-tinged "Little Trouble Girl") and Thurston Moore's dreamlike narratives (Elf Power's sitar-led "Kotton Krown"). Although it's fair to say there will never be another Sonic Youth, it's still interesting to hear a sampling of the band's influence. (CC)

Narnack, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor, Suite 3, New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

V/A – Death By Salt: A Slug Magazine Compilation, 3xCD

This three-CD *Slug Magazine* compilation covers everything that Salt Lake City has to offer, from local country to folk to alternative jazz to metal and punk. Just a few of the bands included are: Vexations, Debonairs, Redd Tape and Chinese Stars. A must have for all *Slug* mag readers. (MG) Slug Magazine, 2225.500 E. Ste. 206, Salt Lake City, UT 84106, www.slugmag.com

V/A – Death Rattle & Roll Volume I, CD

Thirty tracks of dirty rock 'n' roll from mostly San Francisco bands. Opener "Rip RnR" by the Hydromatics is the biggest, featuring members of the Helacopters, Sonic's Rendezvous Band and the Nitwitz. Outside of California you may not know these bands. A decent compilation that gives each band two songs, a nice touch. (EA)

Wondertaker, PO Box 470153, San Francisco, CA 94147-0153, www.wondertaker.com

V/A – Doom Capitol: Maryland | DC Heavy Rock Underground, CD

Chug...bap...chug...bap. All hail the doom. The DC metro area has a longstanding and healthy doom-metal scene, perhaps more than any other single area in the country. This comp highlights a cross section of 14 current carriers of the slow, low & loud torch. Get this and pummel self. (RR) Crucial Biast, PO Box 364, Hagerstown, MD 21741, www.crucialbiast.net

V/A - Live On Third Rail Radio, CD

I tried to find one redeeming quality about his compilation, but honestly I couldn't. This comp is riddled with rudimentary musicianship, horrible singing and cheesy, cliché lyrics. Some songs are *less* bad than others, but that definitely doesn't qualify them as good, either. (EH)

WMUC, University of Maryland, 3130 S. Campus Dining Hall, College Park, MD 20742-8431,

$\ \mathfrak{D}\$ V/A – Montreal Spirit, A Dare To Care Records Family Compilation, CD

Wow, this totally reminds me of the old Bay Area compilations on Lookout or Very Small. The bands are just as scrappy, honest and diverse as their East Bay predecessors, even though most of these bands are from Montreal. The CD gets off to a great start with The Sainte Catherines, who cover

one of my favorite Three Penny Opera songs. Next up is a great track by Fifth Hour Hero, who you may now know from their No Idea releases. Some other standouts include Suck La Marde, The Fallout Project (more on the His Hero Is Gone tip), The Insurgent, The Frenetics, SelfMadeMan and The Honor System. If you're into No Idea stuff, early Very Small compilations or heartfelt punk rock in general (the descendant of pop punk, unlike mall punk), you should definitely check this out. (NS)

Dare To Care, PO Box 463, Stn C, Montreal, QC, H2L 4K4, Canada, www.daretocarerecords.com

9 V/A - New Blood: The New Rock 'n' Roll Vol. 3, CD

A dandy of a garage-rock collection, featuring the fine R&B-inspired kicks of The Bellrays and The Hot Snakes, and the Rolling Stones-like riffs of the Sweatmasters. While all these 25 songs are previously released, it's hard to fault a compilation that combines the passionately desperate wails of Pretty Girls Make Graves with the cabaret howls of lan Svenonius' Weird War. (TM) Artrocker Records, 3A Highbury Crescent, London, NS TRN, UK www.artrocker.com

9 V/A - Nuestras Voces...Son Vuestras Pesadillas, CD

An interesting punk comp from bands from around the world that benefits Radio Bronka in Barcelona, Spain. The bands featured are from Spain, Brazil, France, USA, Denmark and other countries. There's good variety to this comp: hardcore, drum and bass, metal, and other styles, done in the band's native tongue. It comes with a great-looking booklet telling about the bands. It's only \$6 plus shipping, a good deal. (JJG)

Radio Bronka PO Box 25102 de Barcelona, CP 08080, Spain, www.sindominio.net/rbronka

9 V/A - Old Enough To Know Better - 15 Years of Merge Records, 3xCD

You can't really go wrong with a three-disc Merge compilation. Well known as the self-serving label of Superchunk, North Carolina's staple is celebrating its 15th year of existence. The first two discs chronicle their diverse catalogue of releases, while the third consists of unreleased and/or rare tracks. Over the years, Merge has consistently put out an array of top-notch, progressive records, many of which have become indie pillars. Minimalist singer songwriters, punk pioneers and parent-pleasing lo-fi pop stars are all fair game. Personal favorites include Crooked Fingers, Neutral Milk Hotel, Polvo, Seaweed and of course Superchunk. Happy friggin' Birthday! (BM) Merge Records, PO Box 1235, Chapel HIII, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

V/A - The Only Constant Is Change, 2xCD

There are 44 songs on this beast, 36 rare or unreleased, with big names like Pennywise, Rise Against, Bigwig, Strung Out and Weston. Nothing ground-breaking, but if you snow board or attend the Warped Tour every year, you'll probably love it. How the hell did Turbonegro get on this thing anyway? (TK) Volcom Entertainment, 1740 Monrovia Ave, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, www.volcoment.com

V/A - Punk-O-Rama 9, CD

The latest in the long-running cheapo compilations features 24 tracks from the varied Epitaph roster, including standout tracks from The Weakerthans, Bouncing Souls and Eyedea & Abilities. Top it off with a bonus DVD containing 11 videos, and you'll know why Epitaph's always on top of the sampler game. (BN) Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Bivd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

V/A - Saved By Punk Rock Vol. 1, CD

The track listing isn't numbered, and the sequence of bands is different on the back cover and the insert. Confusing, but not such a big deal in the end 'cause this is mostly generic, similar-sounding punk/hardcore. It's pretty clear the label's and bands' hearts are in the right place, though. (JC)
Rezist! Records, 4300 Price Lane, longview, TX 75605, www.resistrecords.com

V/A - Vans Warped Tour 2004 Tour Compilation, 2xCD

Like a typical summer festival, there's too much to digest on this two-disc compilation that showcases 50 bands. Most are unreleased tracks, meaning not good enough to make real releases (you should hear what that means for Good Charlotte), usually seem as treats. But one of the most unanticipated and lightweight Warped Tours in recent memory produces an equally lightweight sampler. (SM)

Side One Dummy Records, www.sideonedummy.com

We want to review your stuff. Send it along to: Punk Planet 4229 N. Honore Chicago IL 60613



zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Abbie Amadio (AJA), Amy Adoyzie (AA), Joe Biel (JB), Vincent Chung (VC), Lisa Groshong (LG), Dan Laidman (DAL), Brian Moss (BM), Claire Sewell (CS)

AK lnk #10

Record, movie, and show reviews fill the bulk of this Alaskan zine about their scene. The cooler parts are some comics and DIY clothing articles. I wish they were a little more critical of the bands, like asking why it's almost entirely boys involved. (JB)

\$1, PO Box 244235, Anchorage, AK 99524

America? #17

There are some wonderfully evocative lines in this stream-of-consciousness personal zine that details the writer's life in Florida through vignettes and brief musings. "The same plaza where the older kids huffed glue & told me to stay in school." And he loves Hüsker Dü, so you can't go wrong. (DAL) \$1, PD Box 13077, Gainesville, FL 32604-1077

Anger Thermometer

Musings about being subjected to racist statements by friends, losing a wallet, going to a graduation, etc. I appreciate the perspective, but it seems there is motivation to express themselves beyond what they have specifically to express, which makes this a bit of inconsistent mishmash. (JB) \$1,1404 S. Manhattan Pl., Los Angeles, CA 90019-4703, angerthermometer@hotmail.com

Arthur #11

Chock-full of crafty columns, candid interviews and witty comics, *Arthur*'s intellectual newsprint is both professional and intriguing. The real-deal layout and wordsmithing make for a publication capable of lime lit, well-deserved mass attention. Issue 11 features an interview with Kim Gordon, a hilarious justification of Dead Headism and more. (BM) \$5,3408 Appleton St., Los Angeles, CA 90039, www.arthurmag.com

Askew Reviews #11

As the title suggests, Askew Reviews specializes in, well, reviews: books, music, beer and films, ranging from the mainstream to erotica to b-movies. The writing is amateurish, as were the fiction pieces at zine's end. Nevertheless, it's a good resource for finding low-budget films to indulge in. (AJA) No price given, PO Box 684, Hanover, MA 02339, www.askewreviews.com

Aubergine

Claire is confused about her identity. Is she gay? Is she a drag queen? Why is Frodo hot? She muddles in indecision and a lot of self-affirmation. Readers are rarely engaged in the rambling, redundant diatribe; it comes off as a hardly empowering A.A. confessional with no free coffee. (VC) St or trade. PD Box 751911. Houston, TX 77275-1911, umikol@yahoo.com

Bartok Suite #1

A cookie-cutter punk zine with some predictable trappings: interviews and reviews, short anecdotes and references to stencils and dumpsters. This could change someone's life, but could be pretty boring some someone who's seen it before. (JB)

1 stamp/trade, Chris Donaldson, 4980 Tamarind Ridge Dr., Naples, FL 34119

Bitch #25

Dealing with labor and love, this issue's least interesting sections are overlong, pedantic essays by PhD candidates. Its strongest material is several snappy "true stories from the work trenches," especially Leslie Miller's, about putting her kid in daycare. As always, the book and music reviews are excellent. (LG)

\$4.95, 1611 Telegraph Ave., Ste 515, Oakland, CA 94612, www.bitchmagazine.com

Blackthorn #4

Anarchist newspaper from the city of Roses. While it's sometimes painfully vague and other times painfully dogmatic I am very impressed by their efforts. The highlights this time include a biodiesel tour journal, international performance groups and dealing with sexual assault in our communities. (JB) Free, PO Box 11046, Portland, OR 97211

Chaos and Fruit Punch #1

Here we have some crazy, off-the-top-of-the-head rambling about Nader, President Bush and the upcoming election. Also an interview with one-man band, Killer Squirrel. I think this could do better in a half-size format and with less use of a Sharpie to color in backgrounds. (CS)

\$3, Operation Phoenix Records, PO Box 13380, Mill Creek, WA 98082, www.operationphoenixrecords.com

Coldhandsdeadheart #18

Mike Twohig draws like Hunter S. Thompson writes, zooming from subject to subject with manic, sometimes messy, energy. A compact collection of complicated ink drawings with bubbly writing filling any possible white space, Twohig's zine skids from politics to punk shows to memories of being robbed of his cassette-tape fund back in his paperboy "carrier of the month" days. Despite the sometimes confessional tone, there's not much insight about Twohig himself. Instead, the zine feels most effective and intense when Twohig points his shrewd pen at politics, crafting drawings that pulse with ridicule and rage. (LG)

\$2, Mike Twohig, 72-1 Meadow Farm South, North Chill, NY 14514, www.angelfire.com/III/miketwohig

Doppelganger

An endearingly harrowing short story about a young girl temporarily abandoned at an lowa gas station. As her anxiety rises moment by moment, it gets better and better, though the second person narrative is a little jarring. Illustrated with spartan, kind of goofy art. (DAL)

\$1 + stamp, ohthedrama@yahoo.com

Duck Box #1

I really liked that this zine was simple, yet funny, and didn't run around in circles trying to get its point across. There are pieces on living in and leaving Green Bay, meeting a friend on the city bus, plus a good interview with Adam Pfahler of Jawbreaker fame. Recommended. (CS)

S2, Rick Arnold, 2440 Lyndale Ave. S, Minneapolls, MN 55405

Everyday Resistance #1

Feeling guilty about stealing from your corporate job? Doubting reports of law-enforcement abuse? Got some cloudy piss that could use some cleaning? Well then, here is the zine for you. Forty-four pages of simplistic—and often obvious—ways to scam fast-food restaurants, pass drug tests and avoid the boys in blue. Although the majority of the issues covered are juvenile, the sections concerning citizen rights and police work legalities hold basic value; dearly, we should all understand the details of the law, especially if we're planning something naughty. Everyday Resistance is informative, yet the instructive writing seems to come more so from the prescrive of an angst-ridden teen who's still mad about being detained for playing a stoned game of mailbox baseball than that of a genuine copkillah criminal genius. (BM)

 $\$, c/o Microcosm Publishing, PO Box 144332 Portland, OR 97293, everydayresIstance@yahoo.com

■ Ghosts Of Ready Reference, The #2

The public library has always been a haven for homeless, misfits, geeks and senior citizens, which is one of the main reasons, besides all the free reading material, that I love it so. In *The Ghosts Of Ready Reference*, the writer, who is a public library employee, tells the stories of the bizarre characters that pass through the stacks on a daily basis. From the dim-witted, obese and foul-mouthed Babyface to Mad Margaret, the professional-looking woman who speaks in "academic word salad," he relates their ridiculousness and his disbelief at such behavior. Although the writer is obviously intelligent, considering how well the zine is written, it is a disappointment that he writes with such an air of superiority and disgust for his characters. The stories do have their funny moments, but his quips go beyond making fun and come across as downright malevolent. It's a shame when frustration manifests into hate, resulting in the "beating up" on those who least deserve it. Apparently, even the library has its fair share of disgruntled employees. (AJA)

3 stamps/trade, Love Bunni Press, 2622 Princeton Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44118, www.ishitmypants.blogspot.com

Heartattack City

Jessica's eloquent poetry decorates with such detail that, once around the craft of the line, the reader feels the true grittiness of her imagery. Seasoned so well to the touch, it leaves a sweeter aftertaste. The powerful juxtapositions make for impressive poetry—a rarity in the PP reviewer piles. (VC) \$4, Jessica Manack, PO Box 10203, Pittsburgh, PA 15232, Jmanack@hollins.edu

Hey What's Up? #3

Troy Gallaher's strangely charming zine is 20 pages of refreshingly brief stories and poems like little zen koans, accompanied by ballpoint line drawings featuring a Frankenstein-monkey dude and bored-in-class-type doodles that complement the material effectively. Gallaher is at his best in the few pieces that don't feature excrement. (LG)

\$1 or trade or stamps, Troy Gallaher, 1047 Lanette Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45230

How To Induce Vomiting Without Declaring Bankruptcy #1

Does "a guide to budget vodka" seem too good to be true? Nay! Mr. Eddle Burrows provides a public-service announcement by downing some harsh vodka just so you won't have to. To top it off, there's a fucking Vodklava recipe! Baklava with vodka! Too good to be true. (AA)

50 cents or 1 stamp. 457 Lagrange, Apt. 4, South Haven, MI 49090

How To Induce Vomiting Without Declaring Bankruptcy #2

A hilarious cheap vodka review zine with enough charm and character to get a sober boy like me laughing along. A haiku, drunken bike riding, ideas and suggestions round it out nicely even though it's a quick read. (JB) 50 cents, Eddie Burrows, 457 LaGrange, Apt 4, South Haven, MI 49090

Impact Press #51

No. 51 continues to explain why we should vote out George W. Highlights include Heather Moore's inspiring piece on creative activists who channel college coursework and cable access into world vegan domination, Adam Finley's light-hearted take on porn and a consciousness-zapping editorial on "climbing the white escalator" by Betsy Leondar-Wright. (LG) \$2, PMB 361, 10151 University Bivd., Orlando, FL 32817, www.lmpactpress.com

■ Inner Swine, The – Volume 10, #2

Jeff Somers has a gift for being able to densely word his cynically humorous prose with fluidity and confidence, in an accessible manner, without coming off as a pretentious writer. However, other than the fictional work



(which is fantastic), I found this particular issue to be rather boring, full of lukewarm laughs and bland self-indulgence. The opening piece attacks tourists and their obnoxious habits, while the next paradoxically features Jeff's bitter European travel logs, complete with tacky scenic photographs. Further readings, if your patience holds, include a somewhat lengthy piece regarding why the trusted author should be sent free bottles of booze, a commentary on modern pain relief medicine and memoirs of Boy Scouts and summer camp. Judging by the whining and consistent references to solo drinking and mind-numbing day jobs, I'd say that Mr. Somers should stick with fiction; apparently his reality is quite bleak. (BM)

\$2, PO Box 3024, Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.innerswine.com

It's All Gravy, #0

This cut-and-paste fanzine focuses on the South Central LA ska/punk scene and includes an interview with local band ONK, show reviews and plenty of bitching ("The Opinion And Rant Issue"). Important for the kids putting it together, but for the rest of us? That is yet to be determined. (AJA) \$1 donation, Nick G., C/o Libros Rev., 312 Eighth St., Los Angeles, CA 90014, gravyzine@hotmall.com

Jinx Removing #7

This zine is about aging gracefully into adulthood as a punk, which got me excited that someone had this shit figured out, but alas it's a series of articles about how they don't have it figured out either. Back to the drawing board. Many of the articles just don't flow, and while I understand their points, it's not accentuated—with the exception of an article about a sex shop, which was excellent and had me on the edge of my seat. Despite that it's still fun to read about Josh running for mayor, autobiographical comics, dancing, being accused of being a Nazi sympathizer, real DIY porn for women and activism. More development and refining of this writing could really make this a force to be reckoned with. Still my favorite zine of this issue. Is it wrong that I could still challenge them to raise the bar a notch? (JB)

Johnny America #1

I'll call this a "Poor Man's McSweeney's," but don't mean it as an insult. Witty, self-referential prose is wrapped up in a beautiful aesthetic. The writers editorialize on hipsters, includge in mainstream pop-culture inanity and appreciate typographic elements, but with the air of snarky intellectualism. (VC) 53, PO Box 44-2001, Lawrence, KS 66044, www.johnnyamerica.net

Junk Drawer #1

Holy esoteric-mind-vomit-zine, Batman! I love this shit. Visceral, bio-mechanical line drawings of a boy and his intestines, rich Xerox textures that brush against your fingers, random jumbles floating from brains onto toner, and found scribbles and notes. It was an exercise for its creators, for them to hash out shit that's been ricocheting in their brains. They say that they don't care if another person "even laid eyes on this little book." Too bad for us because JD reads like a punch in the face from a really good friend. (AA) Free. Flem, 1912 Durfor St., Philladelphia, PA 19145

Left Back #4

Most prison zines reek of claustrophobic frustration. There's a desperate nihilism that proves prison more detrimental than beneficial. Chadd's differs because, while not comfortable, his lucid, introspective essays and patient execution are surprisingly relaxed. Either he's got teleportation skills or a good weed hook up, but regardless, Chadd is chill. (VC) \$3/trade, free to prisoners, 109 Arnold Ave., Canston, RI 02905. www.fanorama.tk

LOUDmouth #6

Angeles, CA 90032

An ambitious feminist magazine out of the Women's Resource Center at California State University, LOUDmouth is not nearly as interesting or innovative as it could be. In this issue, writers tackle leadership and governance in a hodgepodge of Very Serious articles, many reprints. (LG)

Free. Women's Resource Center, University-Student Union, 5154 State University Drive, Los

Make Out Club. The #13

Trish celebrates 10 years in zinedom with poetry, short fiction and personal essays. It's about being queer, nostalgia and sticky situations. The writing is simple and personable, and sometimes clever yet clichéd. (AA)

No price given. 33-345 East Broadway. Vancouver, BC YST IWS, Canada

Marsian Landfill

I don't think I've read anything composed of straight adjectives since I was learning about them in grammar school. This zine Is very, uh, descriptive. Avant garde and chock full of violent imagery, this is the product of a bad acid trip with a Black Flag soundtrack. (VC)

Donation, trade, or \$1.25, 214 11th Ave.. S. Cranbrook BC, VIC 2P5, Canada, godofants@yahoo.com

Melting Wing #1

The maiden flight for this Indianapolis hardcore zine covers Hewhocorrupts, An Albatross, Daughters and more. It leaves a little be desired with lackluster interviews and record reviews, but it's a first shot, so the only way to go is up. (VC)

Free/donation, Luke Shumard, Pinnade Systems, 7340 Shadeland Statlon, Indianapolis, IN 46256

Melting Wing #2

This simple and readable fanzine featuring refreshingly short interviews and reviews is completely fine for what it is. Considering it's an independent study from a high school senior, I'm impressed. Expect great things from this kid. (LG)

Free, Luke Shumard, Pinnacle Systems, 7340 Shadeland Station, Indianapolis, IN 46256, www.meltingwing.com

Memories And Elephants #1

This tiny photography zine left me frustrated by its unrealized potential. I suspected the photos were great, but the photocopied format rendered them blurry and dark. The zine features a thoughtful essay on why Claire focuses on self-portraits and a few shots that survived being photocopied. (LG) \$1 or trade. Gaire, PO Box 751911, Houston TX 77275-1911, untilkol@vahoo.com

Miscreant #4

Stoner zine with some mild rambling about socialism or deconstructing society or whatever the hell it is that stoners ramble on about. Interview with DJ Sleuth, metal review and full-color photography of Canadian graffiti. *Miscreant* should ditch all the text and stick to the graffiti. (AA) \$4.301-628 E. 8th Ave., Vancouver, BC, VST IP1, Canada

Modern Arizona #5

This is the "planes, trains and automobiles" issue. It's an interesting concept in that all of the stories revolve around some mode of transportation (cars, trains, even a Segway). A favorite was the piece on Joe's "Anyone But Bush" bumper stickers. (CS)

\$1 or trade, Joe Unseen, PO Box 494, Brewster, NY 10509

Negrita #4

The writer had an abortion, and apparently her friends weren't terribly supportive, because her zine is full of advice on how to encourage and take care of a friend who is going through something similar. Advice ranges from "Accept what you can and cannot do" to "Cookies—duh!" (DAL) \$1,

No. The #8

This time, *The No* contains some crazy, bad poetry, a few Manga drawings, concert pictures of the bands Akimbo, Youth Brigade and The Briefs. There are also a few album reviews. (CS)

\$1, The No, PO Box 502, Shingle Springs, CA 95682,

No, The #9

Suffering from poor writing and lack of content, this zine isn't offering all too much. However, there is an interview with ex-Arab On Radar drummer, live pictures of Sleater-Kinney and Some Girls, and a couple CD reviews. Snore. (AJA)

\$5 for 8 Issues (back Issues Included), PO Box 502, Shingle Springs, CA, 95682

Philadelphia Independent Vol. 1, #16

Ah, the newspaper big enough to maim large rodents with. Today, I used it to cover my couch cushion fort. This issue includes, but is not confined to, local politician's voting records, the case for pet crabs, coverage of Bukows-ki's life in Philly and a candid photograph of Bernie Mac. (VC)

\$2, 1026 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA 19107, www.philadelphiaindependent.net

Punk Parent #2

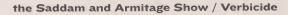
Do fanzine-making guides come standard with diaper samples in the mail these days? A cute time capsule about a 2-year-old and her father who indulges in role-playing games. A sad potty training story and a toothache tale were my favorites in here, though the Christian logic baffled me. (JB) \$1, PO BOX 1201, Greeley, CO 80651

Rabid Chicken Country

Alex writes all about the town of Ocala, Fla., and a scary-sounding town it is. He describes it to be the Confederate flag-waving bastion of the South, where "racism is not a crime," and a major town event is "God and Country Day." But there are two sides to every story, and Alex counteracts the backwards nature of Ocala with a history of radical political movements and

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons.

Records marked with a little eye () redesignated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!





action in the South. There's also an account of The Rainbow People, a group of neo-hippies who converge on the Ocala National Forest every year. I'd definitely like to see more writing about *Rabid Chicken Country* or any other crazy towns Alex might choose to document. (CS)

\$3, Alex Pickett, 174 Goffe Terrace, New Haven, CT 06511, injuredeagle@msn.com

Saddam And Armitage Show, The #1

Ah, the humor of R. John Xerxes. This clever little comic uses goofy news photos of Saddam, Richard Armitage and Ronald Reagan to a construct a comicstyle tale where Saddam and Armitage argue like 5-year-olds, and every page ends in Armitage screaming "Zoinks!" It shouldn't be as funny as it is. (CS) 3 stamps or trade, Love Bunni Press, 2622 Princeton Rd., Cleveland Hts., 0H. 44118

S.C.A.L.P. #2

Dan confronts such topics as xenophobia, racism and classism in simple tales about suburbia, working dead-end jobs and traveling to Seattle, among other things. His style works better than most because he carefully weaves his critiques in among the plot lines. Recommended. (CS) \$2, Dan W., PO BOX 2164, Tempe, AZ 85280

Shit Pop #3

The bilingual *Shit Pop* tackles social change and anarchy in Japan with a zine that's so bit-mapped it's painful to read. Even though most of the zine made absolutely no sense to me, I loved wallowing in its strange world. (LG) \$2 plus shipping, kindlady76@hotmail.com or shitpop2001@yahoo.com

Shoes #4: Marred and Unpolished

Contrary to what Tragedy says about the suburbs, the soccer mom hives are fascinating. Not in the picture-perfect picket fences or its homogenous perfection, but because they masterfully conceal humanity's ugliness under its tame façade. Nathan begins with his hometown, an otherwise cookie-cutter suburb in southwest Ontario. He begins telling stories of chemical spills at the sulfur factory next door, creating a sense of cynical dread similar to Don DeLillo's White Noise. Then Nathan moves on to the cult of Christianity practices of his youth, rendering his Catholic upbringing with a sinister tone. He discusses sexually assaulting a friend as a teen, hanging out with barrio punks on his travels and inadvertently destroying his favorite commercial hang out when his junkie friend introduces the owner to the wonders of hard drugs. Nathan's delivery is scrappy and his sentences stumble upon each other like an inept lush. Judging by the typewriter mistakes, it seems like a one-take-and-cut kind of affair. It doesn't take the world's best writer to tell a good story—only the urge that comes with having something to say (and by "urge," I mean substance, not just indiscriminately flapping one's mouth like a goddamn blog). (VC)

\$2/trade, Nathan, PO Box 1986, Corunna, Ontario, NON 1GO, Canada

Shoes #5: Stupid Greyhound Journal Bullshit

The subtitle pretty much sums it up. Nathan rips on music reviewers, his family, his hometown, his landlord and everyone associated with Greyhound travel in a zine that's full of repeated misspellings, scrawled cartoons, blurry typewriting and bad photos. Yawn. (LG)

\$2, Nathan, PO Box 1986, Coronna, Ontario NON 160, fanzinelibrary@hotmail.com

Signal To Noise #34

Well-made "journal of improvised and experimental music" with a featured story on the reclusive Bonnie "Prince" Billy. To be honest, he was the only dude I recognized in the entire publication. But you might know the others: Steve Lacy & Irene Aebi, Reed Ghazala, Lukas Ligeti, Pete Cosey and more! (AA) \$3.95. PO Box 585, Winooski, VT 05404, www.signaltonoisemagazine.org

Some Hope And Some Despair #6

So, he's in J Church, runs Honey Bear Records and does a zine, even after a disastrous fire destroyed everything he owned. Goddamn, doesn't Lance Hahn make you feel like a slacker? Read about his 2003 tour and interviews with Annie Anxiety, Flux of Pink Indians and Minority Blues Band. (AA) 53. www.honeybearrecords.net

Slug And Lettuce #79

I highly recommend sending donations for and to this Richmond, Va., newsprint zine. Knowledgeable and imbued with the insight that is sometimes absent from those on the fringe discussing social and political issues,

this zine has columns that are all very well worth reading. From environmental issues to motherhood to religion, each topic is discussed with empathy in a fair-minded, diplomatic manner, which is greatly appreciated and needed, considering the rampant extremism and fanaticism occurring on both sides of the political polemical. (AJA)

Free/stamps (60 cents)/donations, c/o Christine, PO Box 26632, Richmond, VA 23261-6632

Spidder #9

Heavy on all-black pages, *Spidder* postures as a horror zine but isn't, unless you find nonsensical stories about non-haunted houses and odes to dead vans disturbing. High points are Kat's insightful "Ornamental Things" and her "VooDoo Lady" cartoon about a woman with long, curly fingernails terrorizing grocery store patrons. (LG)

\$2, 1925 Hwy 69 South, Savannah, TN 38372

Star Frosting #7

A college student's cut-and-paste collection of poetry and stream-of-consciousness writing fragments, many of which are about gender identity and sexual orientation and what she terms, at one point, "all these stupid theoretical anxieties, these questions that breed in the dark warm places in my mind." (DAL)

\$1/trade/stamps, Box 2000, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12604

Story Of My Scab #8

A collection of surreal illustrations innocently graces the page, but provoke a crazed darkness. Crudely drawn like a child's second grade sketchbook, except this kid just got beat by dad because he watched stepmom give the UPS guy head. But everything's happy when you're left to draw alone, right? (VC) 53, WWM, 24 Virginia Ave., San Francisco, CA 94110

Substandart #5

Matt's life is a monotone wash of carpe diem sentiment and melodramatic bohemia. He's forever a pubescent bent on a tragic "art is life" kick. The condescending convictions are so strong that readers long for his failure. Or at least crush his dreams by informing him those dumpstered bagels are spoiled. (VC) \$2/trade, www.substandart.com

Sugar Needle #25

Hey, Sugar Needle, you stole my idea! Or maybe I stole yours, since you're on your 25th issue. Either way, this is a zine about the wonderful world of candy. I love candy, thus I loved this zine. Throughout it, Corina tries and reviews several different candies from around the world (including a mystery Slovakian treat) for varying degrees of likeability. There is also an interview with Clint Johns, who just happens to be the zine buyer for Tower records (who knew such a job existed?). This was definitely a fun read with an interesting format. Send Corina some crazy candy as a trade and maybe she'll review it in her next issue. (CS)

\$1 and a stamp or trade, PO Box 3000152, Minneapolis, MN 55403

Taco Cat #1

Taco Cat boasts a lighthearted collection of amusing illustrations coinciding with nonsensical palindromes, free-form diary entries and haiku poetry. While there's no inspiring political banter, interviews or road-worn travel tales, the material is good for a couple o' smiles and half-laughs. Recommended for bathroom readings. (BM)

No price given, c/o Sarah Pantera, 724 E. 26th St., Minneapolis, MN 55404, sarahpantera@aol.com

Take On Your Heroes #4

This zine continues to be a beautifully designed and written music zine with features on SST records, Hot Cross, Rezillos and more. Richie is obviously very knowledgeable and knows what he likes, which makes his zine shine as a result. (JB)

Free, PO Box 98395, Atlanta, GA 30359

Tales Of Unordinary Perception #1

The beginning of a serial story with a loose plot about a disconnected narrator snapping into the moment to investigate some sort of bizarre occurrence at the trailer park. Or so it seems. The hazy narrative thus far focuses on the frustrations and surreality of trailer life. (DAL)

Envelope & stamp, Maxmillionzucato, Apt. 207, 1501 Summitvlew, Yakima, WA 98902

32 Panels

I'll admit that I'm a sucker for sketchbook zines because they're so egotistical and straightforward, saying, "Look at all the crazy shit my brain spits out!" Chaotic monsters, shifty-eyed characters and girls run the gamut of images latching onto your eyeballs. (AA)

No price given. 328 E. 9th St., #202W, St. Paul, MN, 55101, www.dwitt.com

This Is A Lie

The presentation of this zine is the best part. It has a stamped cover and is bound and put together like a little book. The story inside, about a boy who likes a girl named Alexis that he can't have, could be better, though. (CS) \$4, Greg Sullivan, PO Box 73525, 509 St. Clair Ave. W, Toronto, ON, MGC ICO Canada

Turnentine #4

This is a fair smattering of one high school girl's likes and dislikes. Likes include Edward Norton, Jack Black, some local rock bands and records, altering books and Los Angeles. She dislikes Bush. Fun but not too stimulating. (JB) \$1, 1162 Julet Ave., \$1 Paul, MN 55105

Twenty-Four Hours #4

Didja know that there's a new school of punk by the name of Pencore? You were probably unaware because I just made it up about a year ago to promote by own agenda of taking over the underground one correctional-lens prescription at a time. 24H smartly devotes itself to non-mainstream literature with insightful interviews with litkicks.com's Levi Asher and Clip Tart's Susan Boren; a gaggle of good short fiction, with a standout piece by Melissa Checker; and poetry. So, put on your reading glasses and get your lit on! (AA) \$3.3455 North Hills Dr. #135, Austin, TX 78731

UGZ #15

This is a fairly standard punk zine with lots of interviews (Atrocious Madness, Deathtoll, SMD) and photos of punks at crazy shows. Their columns are better than most of what's usually in these kinds of zines. Jeff Whiplash's column about the current state of PC punk music was a standout. (CS) \$3.50, PMD 419, 1442A Walnut St., Berkeley, CA 94209, www.wethepunx.com

D unDFFP #4

The first few pages of this Southern-influenced zine were really exciting—talking about a trip to Glasgow, the kindness of strangers and adventures of travel. Then it became a boring, standard-fare rock magazine. What a disappointment. There was a nice, thoughtful article about the social injustices performed after 9/11 that was written in a way where it could speak to people unconvinced about how they feel about the situation. It served as a nice pickme-up toward the end, as did more stories about Scotland, the customs there and his experiences. It's just a shame the middle section was such a drag. (JB) \$3, PO Box 48833, Athens, GA 30604, www.seedstar.net/undeep

Underground Crawl #2

Just because R, Lee starts a story about one topic doesn't necessarily mean that's where he'll end it. His love for old jazz underlies all his writing. He takes time developing his stories about working in a small town factory and traveling down deserted roads, among others. A good read. (CS)

\$2, R. Lee, PO Box 1421, Oshkosh, WI 54903, r-lee@new.rr.com

Variations On A Theme #1

Given the subject matter, an interview zine dedicated entirely to themes and theme bands is bound to be somewhat interesting. Featured in the first issue are Madison Avenue Attack (famous jingles covered à la thrash), and You're All Gonna Fucking Get It (compelling grindcore thematically based around September 11th). (BM)

\$1 or trade, 4408 Walnut St., Apt. 1R, Phlladelphia PA 19104, aboynamedstew@yahoo.com

Verhicide #1

What sets *Verbicide* apart is that, besides standard music fare (#11 boasts The Descendents, The Shins and Tiger Army), there's a healthfully heavy concentration on tasteful independent art. Where others publish treatises harping on emo, *Verbicide* fills up with short fiction, photo galleries and other effective uses of voice. (VC)

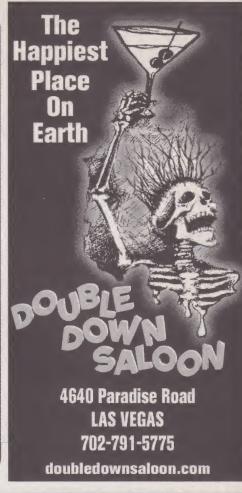
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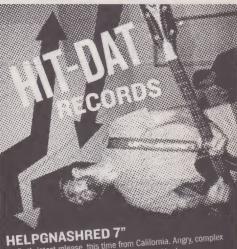
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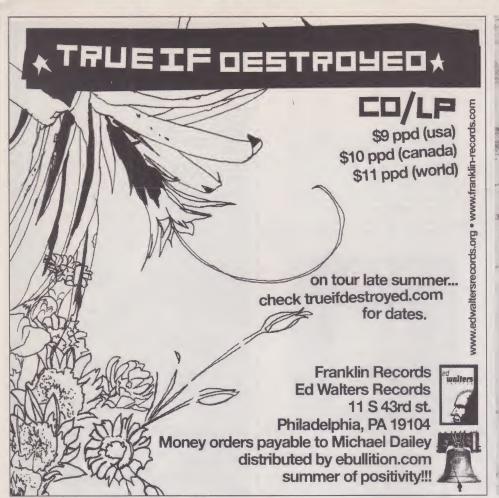
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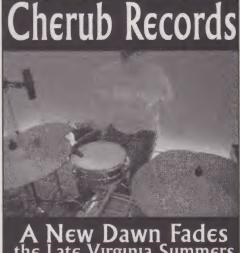
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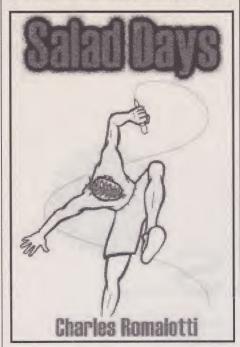
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- Alternative Tentacles Records

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- Electrocution Distribution, Australia

Salad Days is amazing...a must-read for any fan of the punk/hardcore genre. - Through These Eyes eZine

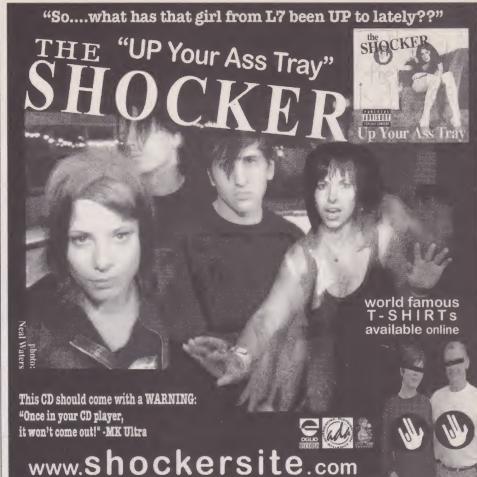
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- Aimee Cooper, author of Coloring Outside The Lines

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GRAB BAG

by Derek McCormack
Akashic Books

I'd like to preface this by saying I'm not a book snob. But sometimes, I think that I have lost faith in modern literature. Every once in a while, however, I'll find a novel—a "modern" novel, if you will—which serves as a reminder that there is relevance and substance out there. Derek McCormack's Grab Bag is one of these rare gems.

Grab Bag is two novels in one, and-although the author wants the reader to distinguish one from the other, it is hard not to draw parallels between the two pieces. Dark Rides and Wish Book both relay the tale of a young homosexual growing up in the '50s and '30s respectively. Although it is marketed under the genre of "gay literature," Grab Bag isn't exclusively focused on the gay experience. McCormack's main character is complex and multi-faceted, as is the plot. The reader is taken from a horribly embarrassing grade school talent show, to a circus freak sideshow, to a hospital where a harrowing Dr. Vine delivers shock treatments as aversion therapy. The scenes that do deal with sexuality however, run the gamut from exploitive and almost grotesque to more meaningful moments of sexual exploration.

The writing itself is sparse—McCormack is a minimalist, but the lack of density does not hinder the storytelling in any way. I've always thought this was sort of a copout . . . until now. McCormack knows how it's done. —Emily Schambra

Full Disclosure: Grab Bag publisher Akashic Books works with Punk Planet in book publishing. The reviewer selected this book with no knowledge of this arrangement and no pressure was put on her to write a positive review—other than the broken arm.

ONE MAN'S TRASH

Ivan E. Coyote
Arsenal Pulp Press

Good storytellers are like junkies: they seek out their tales by any means necessary and when they find them, they wring every last drop out of them—smoke the pipe dry, scrape it, then smoke the resin.

Ivan E. Coyote is a very good storyteller. In *One Man's Trash*, Coyote's sophomore effort, the stories are told to us by a narrator who is not quite a woman, not a quite a man, but 100 percent Canadian Yukon. They take place in old pick-up trucks and grocery stores, and elevate women named Mavis and men who can tell good fish stories to presidential status. The voice is parched with a witty, dry humor that leaves you feeling like the narrator is coyly winking at you, or throwing you a bony elbow in the ribs from time to time to make sure you got the joke. Coyote doesn't feel the need to give much backstory to us, but chooses instead to relay the narratives to the reader as if they know the characters already. All the time playing it cool and off the pulpit about a gender-bending lifestyle that seems as comfortable to the narrator as an old hooded sweatshirt.

Most of the 18 stories here have a strong narrative push to them, but at times others read almost like poems because of the rhythm of the prose and the way Coyote pairs together short and long sentences. I wasn't surprised to find out when researching Coyote that she often performs these stories as spoken word with musical accompaniment. Sometimes, I could have used just a little more detail, one last pull from the pipe. But then again I'm a junkie too, and I'll take my fix however I can get it.

-Robert Biedrzycki

UNFURNISHED

Billups Allen

Schematics Press

Novels with a handful of short stories that all somehow intertwine are great in theory. I'm no novelist, but it seems to me that it would take a master storyteller to converge eight tales into one throughout the duration of a 113 page book. *Unfurnished* author Billups Allen is a good storyteller, but not a master by any stretch of the imagination.

Unfurnished is mainly set in an eight apartment building that plays host to a number of wacky characters with deep, dark secrets. Reviewing this novella is difficult because the entire book seems like a twist and turn, where revealing any plot points might be just enough to give something away that I shouldn't, however the premise is so tired and obvious that most plot twists come across as silly rather than shocking or frightening. We have your junkie, your dominatrix, your obsessive compulsive guy, and the guy that might have a monster in his apartment among others. You might even ask yourself: What do all of these crazy people have in common? How is it possible that they can cross paths? I'm still asking myself the same thing.

With all of these insane happenings, you'd think that Allen would give the reader some sense of closure, a comprehensive conclusion that ties all of the stories together. Instead, we have some occupants' tales totally wrapped up while other tenants end up lost in the fold.

Unfurnished is a decent effort, but I get the feeling that the book was kept short for some reason other than shock value. Budget, maybe? Who knows? I give Allen credit for being able to develop characters (at least somewhat) and go for the throat in a short amount of time, but Unfurnished would have greatly benefited from some more pages to flesh things out.

—Dave Hoffa

THE SNAKEPIT BOOK an interview with author Ben Snakepit

More so than almost any writer or comic artist around right now, Ben Snakepit's zine *Snakepit* accurately captures the minor tumults, major tragedies, and strangely mundane routines of punk rock life with both humor and honesty. Autobiographical without being indulgent, *The Snakepit Book* is a compilation of three years of his work. In three quickly-drawn panels, Ben manages to beautifully detail the highs and lows of each and every day. From the boredom of clerking at a record store, to starting a new band, to getting drunk, then high, then drunk again, Ben places an endearing focus on the wealth of real-world characters around him: pretty girls at parties, irate bosses, a hook-up at the Kinko's counter, a cheating girlfriend. What's so amazing is the scope of the book itself: reading each day's entry, complete with its own theme song, you get the sense you are being given a magical opportunity, an unadorned glimpse into the pitfalls and victories of someone else's life. The realization is this: we are pretty similar, after all. Ben recently answered some questions from the road, where he was touring with the band the Soviettes.

How long have you been doing Snakepit? Why is it important for you to document your life and share it in comic form with others?

I've been drawing *Snakepit* for four years now. I was a big fan of *Jim's Journal* by Scott Dikkers, and when I found out it was fictional, I figured I'd give it a shot for real. I really draw it for myself, and publishing it just happened to work out for me. I'd still draw it, even if nobody ever read it. I guess it's cool that people can relate to it, but I have no expectations for my audience.

Why a three panel format? How do you decide what three moments to draw and tell?

I decided on three panels because that leaves enough room to describe the day, without it getting too involved or complicated. Deciding what to draw is the real trick, because some days a lot more stuff will happen than can fit, so I have to narrow it down to the three best or most interesting things I did that day. Other days, nothing happens and I have to stretch out nothing into three panels. It's a nice challenge.

Your comic is based on the idea of routines, the sometimes sad, sometimes wonderful recurring actions, thoughts, and feelings everyone has. What interests you about this idea of routines?

Everyone's life is basically a series of routines, and all anyone can really do to try and have some control over their life is to attempt to alter these routines into something enjoyable. Usually these new routines end up becoming stale and need to be replaced with altogether new ones. I think the sense of repetition and my trying to escape it is what makes people like my comics.

Each Snakepit comic comes with its own theme song. As a writer, artist, and musician, tell me about how music influences your styles in how and what you're drawing.

Music—punk rock in particular—is the most important thing in the world to me. Getting into the culture and learning about stuff like zines and graffiti and Critical Mass and Food Not Bombs and all that stuff, it has shaped my life so much that it's inescapable, so I embrace it full-on. I like the idea of giving each day a theme song because it enhances the comics and it insures that I have to keep listening to music all the time. Sometimes the theme song is relevant to the days events, other times it's just whatever bullshit I'm listening to at the time.

From describing tense moments with your parents, to getting stoned, to the heartbreak of an awful break-up, it seems almost everything can end up in the comic. but what doesn't make it into the comic and why?

Really, there are no rules. I will put anything in there that I think is relevant or necessary. I think as long as I keep it tasteful, I can address any issue I want. There have been a few occasions where I've had to edit certain events, usually with girls, but I can always manage to get my point across and keep all involved happy.

Output

Description:

pick up the Snakepit Book from Gorskey Press: www.gorskypress.com

ASK A THIRTEEN YEAR-OLD GOTH GIRL NAMED "WINTER" WHAT SHE'S READING

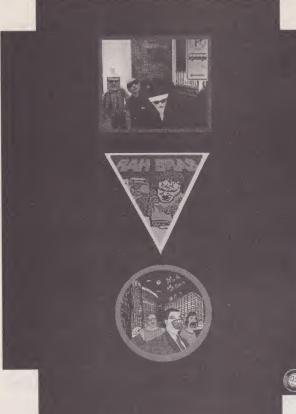
Duh. Why do you want to know what I'm reading? God, you're like so oppressive. You're less cool than my step-dad, Ron, and he has like a fucking toupee and listens to Elton John. Pervert. I know he totally listens to me shower.

But what am I, Winter, reading? Well, I am totally over vampire novels because vampires are so cliché and everyone knows most of that stuff is totally made-up. It's for kids. I can't believe that I actually thought this guy Alexis who I met at my friend's *Vampyre* party was actual-

ly a vampire just because he wore a cape all the time, even to like work at the movie theater. A vampire would not drive a Toyota, first of all.

Here's what Winter's reading now: *The Intuitionist* by Colson Whitehead. It's awesome. It's about this lady elevator inspector who gets framed for a terrible elevator crash and everyone wants to blame her because she's the city's first black female inspector. It's like a detective story set in a kind of dreamy world like the '50s but not quite,

and how there's this big division in the world of elevator inspectors between the Empiricists, who test the elevators by the book and check the mechanics, and the Intuitionists, who test the elevators through meditation and instinct. It reminds me of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* because of how it deals with race, but it's strange and funny and very suspenseful, too. I got to go right now. My step-dad is videotaping me. —Winter Ravenmoon



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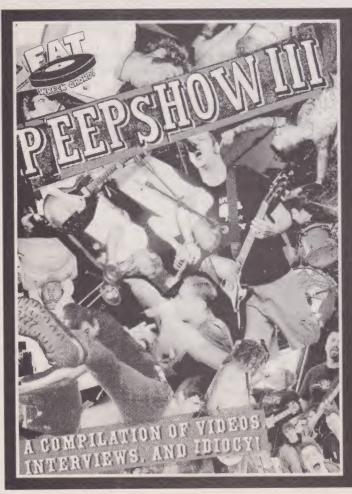
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see

Where to find more information about this issue's features.

interviewed this issue:

Fred Armisen

Besides turning on your TV most Saturday nights, you can see a (very) little bit more of Fred at: www.fredarmisen.net

Taking Back Sunday

They're fashionable and online at: www.takingbacksunday.com

Where You Want to Be (their latest release, not your personal aspiration) is available from Victory Records: www.victoryrecords.com

Anders Nilsen

See his strange, pretty (and pretty strange) pictures go to www.drawnandquarterly.com

23 Five Incorporated

Check out the work that these talented folks are doing: www.23five.org

The Reputation

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You've heard what the kids are saying, now go see for yourself. Check out their website at: www.reputationmusic.com

Their new release *To Force a Fate* is available from www.lookoutrecords.com

I Am the World Trade Center

You can find them online at www.iamluxe.com/worldtrade

The Coverup is available from Gammon Records: www.gammonrecords.com

Channels

For news, tour dates, and more go to: www.channelstheband.com

For more info on J Robbins' recording work: www.jrobbins.net

Channels' debut EP, Open, is available from Desoto Records: www.desotorecords.com

articles in this issue:

This is What Democracy Looks Like

For more coverage of what happened at the 2004 Republican National Convention protests, go to: http://nyc.indymedia.org

Workers of the Night, Unite

Here are several links to find out about the issues that Sex Workers deal with every day: www.allwomencount.com

Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive www.hips.org

Sex Workers International Media Watch www.swimw.org/swimw.html

Network of Sex Work Projects www.nswp.org

Queer As Fuck

Mike Rogers is opening the closet door at www.blogactive.com

Team Zine

The three zine projects outlined in the story can be found at:

Spiral Arts Education www.uic.edu/classes/ad/ad382

Roar Magazine C/o Kelvyn Park High School 4343 W. Wrightwood Ave Chicago, IL, 60639 (include \$1 per issue)

Say What www.youngchicagoauthors.org

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ANTI-FLAG "Death Of A Nation"



ANTI-FLAG's first-ever live DVD, Death Of A Nation is a visual chronicle of their recent tours across the United States, in support of their most recent Fat Wreck Chords CD



LET IT BURN "Expanding Universe"



LET IT BURN is the hardest working band to come up from the cracks in sometime. Mixes sounds of traditional 80's punk and 90's Brit rock in a new and original way.



THE FREEZE "Freak Show! Crawling Blind"



"Idiot Nation"

THE PARTISANS TARREST

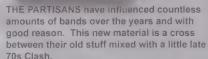
DARLINGTON "Euthanize Me"

Powerful, straight-forward punk with those insanely frightening lyrics by Clif Hanger. 31 songs, all new artwork, personal liner notes from Clif and great photos included.

High energy four piece from Austria. Ideal

for fans of HOT WATER MUSIC, STRIKE

ANYWHERE and GOOD RIDDANCE.



Hailing from Dallas Texas, DARLINGTON started in 1995 playing a fierce brand of punk pop with early RAMONES/UNDERTONES influences. Euthanize Me is full of tattooed, snarling punk pop gems



DEEP EYNDE "Shadowland"

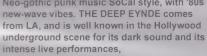


INSAINTS 'Sins Of Saints"



VARIOUS ARTISTS "We Ain't Housewife Material"







Formed in 1989 with now-deceased fetish model/dominatrix MARIAN ANDERSON on vocals, and Daniel Deleon on guitar, the INSAINTS are remembered as one the most extreme and outrageous punk bands of all time.



This all-female/female fronted punk, rock and garage compilation features BETTY BLOWTORCH, SHEMALE TROUBLE, THE GEE STRINGS, MENSEN, FIFI AND THE MACH 3, and much more!



Louie". A modern classic!

These charm school rejects apply their sinister handiwork to tracks like "Big Black

Witchcraft Rock" and "Papa Satan Sang

'Fiends Of Dope Island"



'How To Make A Monster"



The CRAMPS reach back into the clammy womb of their prehistoric past to release HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER, a 2- disc 143 minute frightfest of previously unreleased rare tracks.



Over 20 years of punk rock devotion...



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"Off Key Melodies"
LP/CD



FLOOR
"Dove"
LP/CD



J CHURCH "Society is a Carnivorous Flower" LP/CD



THE HOLY MOUNTAIN
"Bloodstains Across
Your Face..." 12"/CD



GLASS & ASHES
"Aesthetic Arrest"
LP/CD



NEW MEXICAN
DISASTER SQUAD &
WESTERN ADDICTION
12"/CD



NORTH LINCOLN
"Truth is a Menace"
LP/CD



The Albatross and the Architect LP/CD



THIS BIKE IS A PIPE BOMB "Three Way Tie For a Fifth" LP



HOT WATER MUSIC
"The New What
Next" LP



RUMBLESEAT
"Rumbleseat"
LP/CD



VETERAN "This is Not..." LP/CD



TRAPDOOR
FUCKING EXIT
"Be Not Content"
LP/CD



TRUE NORTH
"Somewhat
Similar" LP/CD



WHISKEY & Co. "Whiskey & Co." CD



COALESCE
"Give Them Rope
She Said v2.0" LP



"You Have Hurt My Business..." 7"/CDep



NO CHOICE "Dry River Fishing" CD



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STRIKEFORCE DIABLO "The Albatross and the Architect" LP/CD



THIS BIKE IS A PIPE **BOMB** "Three Way Tie For a Fifth" LP



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THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY

ISSUE #64 NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2004

TAKING BACK SUNDAY

THE CHANNELS NEW

